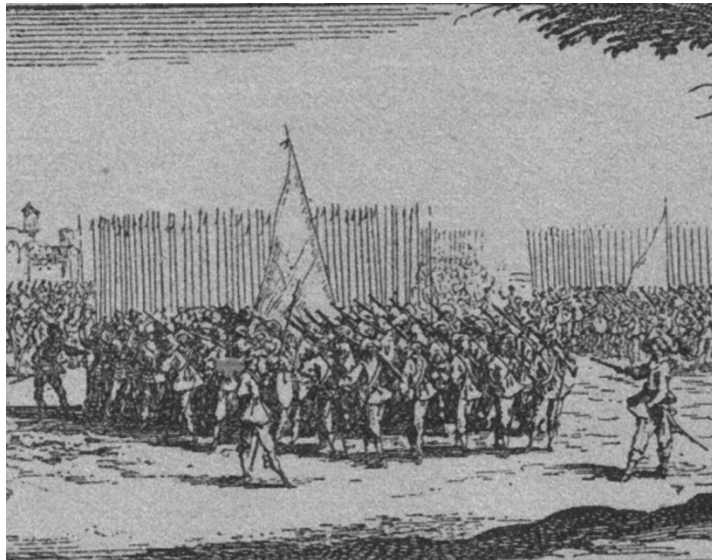


Battalia

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Foreword

The ability of past conflict to contribute to the conceptualization and creation of modern identity is a powerful argument for the relevance and continuation of the study and protection of these important sites. This is accomplished in no small part by raising public awareness. The Battlefields Trust has been on the heritage front-lines, promoting local engagement and encouraging public stewardship; our mission: the preservation, interpretation and presentation of battlefields as historical and educational resources. As this is accomplished via the collaboration between the academic, amateur and veteran communities, this new journal, *Battalia*, highlights this partnership, publishing diverse articles to raise awareness of Britain's unique battlefield resources.

The Battlefields Trust aims to publish this journal on an annual basis. Submissions for publication are always welcome and should be submitted to me at journal.editor@battlefieldstrust.com

Jacqueline Veninger
Editor

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Front Cover: Detail from Jacques Callot's *Miseries of War*, Paris, 1633

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The Defeat of the sons of Harold in 1069

By: Nick Arnold BA, M.Phil

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Abstract

In June 1069 two sons of the slain King Harold raided Devon with a fleet of at least sixty-four ships. The raid ended in complete defeat. In the course of two battles fought in a single day, the raiders lost most of their army. Conflicting locations for these events offered by the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and Orderic Vitalis have hampered any reconstruction of the raid or an appreciation of its significance. However close study of the sources and the estuary of the Taw and Torridge suggests that Northam in north Devon was the most likely battlefield.

Introduction

In the summer of 1069 two sons of the slain King Harold of England sailed from Ireland to Devon with either sixty four (Swanton, 2000, p. 203) or sixty-six ships (William of Jumièges, 1995, pp. 180-181). There they were defeated in two battles fought in a single day. According to both English and Norman sources (Fig. 1) most of the invaders were killed. Unfortunately the sources offer conflicting locations for the battles and the resultant divergent accounts have obscured their historical significance. In the absence of battlefield archaeology it is only possible to propose a probable location. However, close study of the sources and the historical geography of the Taw and Torridge estuary suggests that the parish of Northam was a scene of these events.

Sources for the Battle

The English sources for the raid are Version D of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, (hereinafter ‘the *Chronicle*’) and the *Chronicon ex Chronicis* attributed to John of Worcester. The *Chronicle*’s account was apparently written later in the eleventh century (Swanton, 2000, p. xxv) and Worcester’s brief summary was based on the *Chronicle* (John of Worcester, 1998, pp. 6–9). Writing around 1136, Geoffrei Gaimar described an earlier raid in 1068 in his poem *Estoire des Engleis* (Gaimar, 2009, p. ix, pp. 292-295) but does not mention the 1069 battles.

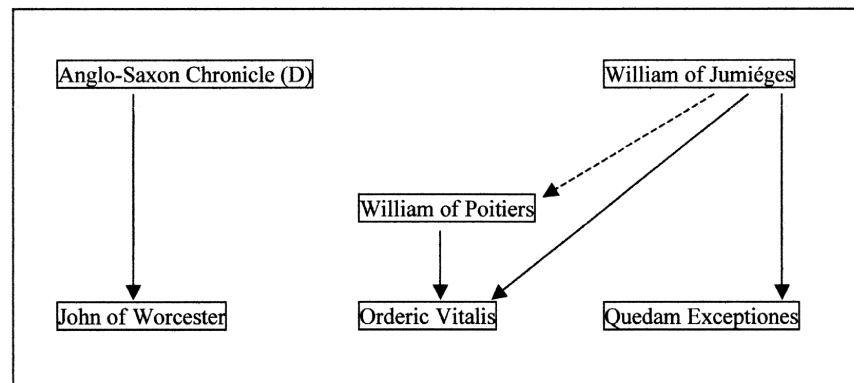


Figure 1. Sources for the raid in 1069. A dotted line denotes a conjectural relationship between sources (diagram by the author).

The Norman sources begin with an account in the *Gesta Normannorum Ducum* written by William of Jumièges within a few months of the battles (William of Jumièges, 1992, p. xxxiv, p. xlix). This account is detailed enough to come from an eyewitness and although biased in favour of the Normans, is nevertheless of great value (William of Jumièges, 1995, pp. 180-183). Between 1101 and 1103 an unknown author wrote *Quedam Exceptiones*, an abridged and interpolated version of Jumièges' text, with additional material (William of Jumièges, 1995, p. 290, pp. 303-304). Around 1125 Orderic Vitalis wrote an account of the battles in Book IV of his *Ecclesiastical History* (Orderic Vitalis, 1990, p. xv, pp. 224-225). Although nearly all the information Orderic provides is found in Jumièges, there is some additional information. Textual evidence suggests that this came from the lost final portion of William of Poitiers' *Gesta Gvillelmi* (Orderic Vitalis, 1990, p. xxxii). Poitiers was a former royal chaplain (Orderic Vitalis, 1990, p. xviii, pp. 184-185, pp. 258-259), who wrote around 1073-1074 (William of Poitiers, 1998, p. xx). There is no evidence that Orderic read *Quedam Exceptiones* or John of Worcester's account of the 1069 battles, although he met John before 1124 (Orderic Vitalis, 1990, p. xv, pp. 186-189).

The Raid of 1068

The context for the raid was a series of rebellions against the Normans that broke out in 1068. Orderic relates how the city of Exeter defied King William and attempted to enlist the support of other towns – presumably the Devon *burh* of Totnes, Lydford and Barnstaple. Following the submission of Exeter to the king after an eighteen-day siege (Orderic Vitalis, 1990, pp. 210-215), the *Chronicle* records that Gytha, the mother of King Harold fled to Flat Holm in the Bristol Channel (Swanton, 2000, p. 202) and John of Worcester adds that she fled from Exeter (John of Worcester, 1998, pp. 6–7). Modern historians have assumed that Gytha encouraged the rebellion (for example Green, 2002, p. 63). Jumièges describes how two sons of King Harold accompanied by many of his household troops (*multis uernaculis*) left the rebels in York in the early summer and went to Ireland where they sought the aid of King 'Dermot' (William of Jumièges, 1995, pp. 180-181) - properly Dairmait mac Máel na mbó

(Hudson, 2005, p. 157). John of Worcester names three sons - Godwine, Edmund and Magnus (John of Worcester, 1998, pp. 8-9) but Gaimar suggests that the third youngster was Tostig, an otherwise unknown nephew of Harold (Gaimar, 2009, pp. 292-293, p. 430).

In the 1050's Ireland offered support for disaffected English noblemen. In 1052 Dairmait supplied Harold and his brother Leofwin with nine ships for a raid on England after King Edward banished the family (Swanton, 2000, p. 176, pp. 178-179) and in 1055 the outlawed Earl Ælfgar collected eighteen ships from Ireland and ravaged Hereford (Swanton, 2000, pp. 184-187). This time Dairmait and his son Murchad provided ships and men for an expedition to Bristol. Harold's sons might have been seeking allies because the town had supplied Harold with ships in 1062 (Swanton, 2000, p. 191) and exported slaves to Ireland (Winterbottom and Thompson, 2002, pp. 101-103). However once they arrived at the mouth of the Avon, their army plundered the surrounding region (Swanton, 2000, p. 203) (*hergode sona ofer eall þone ende*) (Jebson, 1996-2006, 1067) and the men of Bristol closed their gates and defended their town.

Thwarted at Bristol the sons of Harold landed near Bleadon (Anderson, 1938, p. 16, p. 108). Here a landowner named Eadnoth led an army against them. According to the *Chronicle* the initial landing in the mouth of the Avon had been unexpected (*com an Haroldes suna ... unwær*) (Jebson, 1996-2006, 1067) and presumably this army had been assembling whilst the sons of Harold pillaged around Bristol. Eadnoth had been one of King Harold's stallers but he was apparently eager to prove his loyalty to the new regime. In the ensuing battle, Eadnoth was killed and both sides suffered heavy losses (Swanton, 2000, p. 203). Since John of Worcester only mentions two sons in 1069 it is possible that Magnus was killed or wounded, although Barlow suggests that Magnus died as a hermit many years later (Barlow, 2002, p. 169). After Bleadon the campaign turned into a series of coastal raids. These are hard to reconstruct but John of Worcester suggests that the fleet returned to Ireland with the plunder of Devon and Cornwall (John of Worcester, 1998, pp. 8-9). The fleet might easily have rounded Land's End as Harold did in 1052 (Swanton, 2000, p. 179) and attacked the nine manors in the estuary of the Devon Avon recorded in the Domesday Book as 'laid waste by Irishmen' (Thorn and Thorn, 1985, Devon, 1 and 2, 17.33-17.41).

Divergent accounts of the landing in 1069

The following year, around midsummer (*to þam middansumera*) according to the *Chronicle*, the sons of Harold returned to Devon. They sailed into the mouth of the Taw (*coman ... into Taw muðan*) and landed there (*þær ... up eodon*) (Jebson, 1996-2006, 1068). John of Worcester's Latin prose confirms that they landed at the mouth of the Taw (*in ostio fluminis Tau applicuerunt*) (John of Worcester, 1998, p. 8). Although Victorian scholars such as Forrester misread Worcester's *Tau* as *Tauī* and located the landing at the mouth of the Tavy (Florence of Worcester, 1854, p. 172), in medieval records Tavy was never spelt *Tau* (Gover, *et al.*, Part I, 1969, p. 14). In any case it would have been surprising if Worcester had thought the landing took place in the Tavy because he based his account on the *Chronicle*. William of Jumièges does not locate the landing, stating that the sons of Harold landed at 'a site which they considered most strategic' (*regione maxime opportunum estimauerunt*) (William of Jumièges, 1995, pp.

180-181). In contrast, Orderic Vitalis states that the sons of Harold landed at Exeter (*Exonio appulerunt*) (Orderic Vitalis, 1990, pp. 224-225).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the contradiction between Orderic and the English sources, historians have offered conflicting locations for the raid. Freeman opted for a raid on the Taw with general plundering in Devon and perhaps a raid on Exeter, (Freeman, 1871, p. 243). Elliot suggested without evidence that the battles took place at Tawstock on the River Taw (Elliot, 1901, p. 475) whilst Alexander accused the *Chronicle* of an error and located the battles close to the nine wasted manors in south Devon (Alexander, 1923, p. 125). Hoskins, and later Vachell, located the fighting in Northam in north Devon (Hoskins, 2003, p. 445; Vachell, 1966, p. 339) but neither offered evidence. Barlow located the raid at Exeter (Barlow, 2002, p. 169) and Hudson described raids on the Tavy, Exeter and the Taw, (Hudson, 2005, pp. 159-160). In fact a landing near Exeter seems improbable. The author of *Quedam Exceptiones* knew of the arrangements to defend Exeter and yet he states that the sons of Harold planned to plunder the area adjoining (*regionem proximam*) Devon and Cornwall (William of Jumièges, 1995, pp. 303-304) - presumably around the border of the two counties. This might refer to the royal estates of Hartland in North Devon and Kilhampton in north Cornwall, but it cannot possibly mean Exeter.

The information about the landing at Exeter is one of three pieces of information that Orderic apparently took from the lost portion of William of Poitiers' *Gesta Guillelmi*. The second piece of information is that one William Gualdi led the victorious army (together with a Breton named Brian son of Eudo), and the third piece of information is that the raiders fled in two skiffs (*duabus scaphis*) (Orderic Vitalis, 1990, pp. 224-225). Orderic normally relied on Poitiers for the campaigns between 1066 and 1071 (Orderic Vitalis, 1990, pp. 258-261, p. xxxii) and the suggestion that the landing at Exeter came from Poitiers is supported by textual evidence. Immediately prior to the siege of 1068, Orderic includes a description of Exeter, which clearly prefigures the 1069 landing by emphasising the town's accessibility for the sons of Harold and Brian son of Eudo: 'It is a wealthy and ancient city built in a plain, strongly fortified and only two miles away from the sea-shore and the shortest routes to Ireland and Brittany.' (Orderic Vitalis, 1990, pp. 210-211).

Davis and Chibnall argued that Orderic's account of the siege is derived from Poitiers (William of Poitiers, 1998, p. xxxvii; Orderic Vitalis, 1990, pp. 210-211) and this passage is similar to Poitiers' description of Winchester: 'The town of Winchester is famous and strong ... It can quickly receive help from the Danes. It is fourteen miles from the sea that separates England from the Danes.' (William of Poitiers, 1998, pp. 164-165) Davis and Chibnall suggested that the 'Danes' (*Danos*) were based in Ireland (William of Poitiers, 1998, p. 164) and so both passages, the first attributed to Poitiers and the second definitely by him, reflect concern about a possible Irish landing.

The leader named as 'William Gualdi' was William de Vauville who, according to *Quedam Exceptiones*, was vigorous in arms (*uir armis strenuus*) and responsible for defending Exeter Castle (*Castrum Exonie tuebatur Willelmus de Waluilla*) (William of Jumièges, 1995, pp. 303-304, p. 291). If Poitiers knew that de Vauville was based at Exeter, he might have assumed that the battles took place nearby – an understandable error given that Poitiers was writing from memory in Normandy (William of Poitiers, 1998, pp. xix-xx). This admittedly tentative argument is given some support by Orderic's account of a Danish raid later in 1069. In this

account, the Danes raided Norwich and were forced to put to sea (*in pelagus abire compulsi*) by Ralph de Gael (Orderic Vitalis, 1990, pp. 226-227).

Since Norwich is not on the sea and the Danes were raiding coastal areas it seems unlikely that the Danes would have risked attacking Norwich and more probable that the fight took place on the coast. Once again, inaccurate geography is followed by an assumption that a landing took place close to the base of a local commander. Once again Poitiers is believed to be the source and the suggestion that the Danes fled shamefully is typical of Poitiers' descriptions of the cowardly flight of enemies, such as the Londoners in 1066 (William of Poitiers, 1998, pp. 146-147). The implausible claim that the raiders fled in two skiffs might have been Poitiers' recollection of court gossip. Orderic ends his account by exclaiming that the sons of Harold suffered a just fate because they tried to avenge a 'tyrant father' (Orderic Vitalis, 1990, pp. 224-225). Whilst Poitiers refers to Harold as a tyrant on several occasions (William of Poitiers, 1998, pp. 138-139, pp. 152-153, pp. 156-157), Orderic independently describes Harold as a tyrant (Orderic Vitalis, 1990, pp. 136-137) and this concluding remark could well represent his own opinion.

The location of the landing of 1069

The foregoing discussion suggests that the sons of Harold landed at the mouth of the Taw rather than Exeter. This is the historic name for the combined estuary of the Taw and the Torridge (Fig. 2). In 1249 the port now known as Appledore was referred to as *in portu de Tauemuth* and in 1326 as *villa de Tawe mouth* (Gover, *et al.*, Part I, 1969, p. 102). In the 1540's Leland referred to the combined estuary as the 'mouth of Tawe' or 'haven mouth of Tawe' (John Leland, 1907, pp. 171-173) and in the 1720's Defoe described the estuary as "the mouth of the Taw" (Defoe, 1991, p. 248).

The estuary is a dynamic environment but although the banks seem to have shifted westward, there has been no alteration of the Taw and Torridge river channels since 1069. Nor, apart from the appearance of sand dunes fronting Braunton Burrows and a pebble ridge fronting Northam Burrows, has the basic character of the shores altered (Pethick, 2007, pp. 4-6). The burrows were not suitable for landing since they were areas of low-lying land without fresh water, often flooded and exposed to storms brought by the prevailing westerly winds (Keene and Keene, 1997, p. 40). To the south-west the coast is rocky and to the south-east the Instow sands hampered the approach of ships and were equally exposed to storms from the prevailing winds (Keene and Keene, 1997, p. 4).

There was, however, one sheltered location in the mouth of the Taw suitable for a landing. This was the beach at Appledore with the creek fed by a stream mapped by Denham in 1832 (Keene and Keene, 1997, pp. 24-25). This creek appears to be the port mentioned in the medieval records since the area overlooking the creek is named as 'Towmuth' in a deed of 1522 (Maxwell Lyte, 1915, C. 6916). The creek was probably a landing place in the eleventh century since a charter of Henry II quotes a lost eleventh century charter, which refers to ships calling at the manor of Northam (Round, 1899, Charter 452, pp. 155-156). In 1630 Westcote noted that ships commonly 'stop and lie safe on the shore when the tide is out' at Appledore (Westcote, 1845, p. 342) and in 1772 Murdoch Mackenzie advised: 'Ships that can take the sand had better haul ashore on the sand at Appledore' (Keene and Keene, 1997, p. 32).

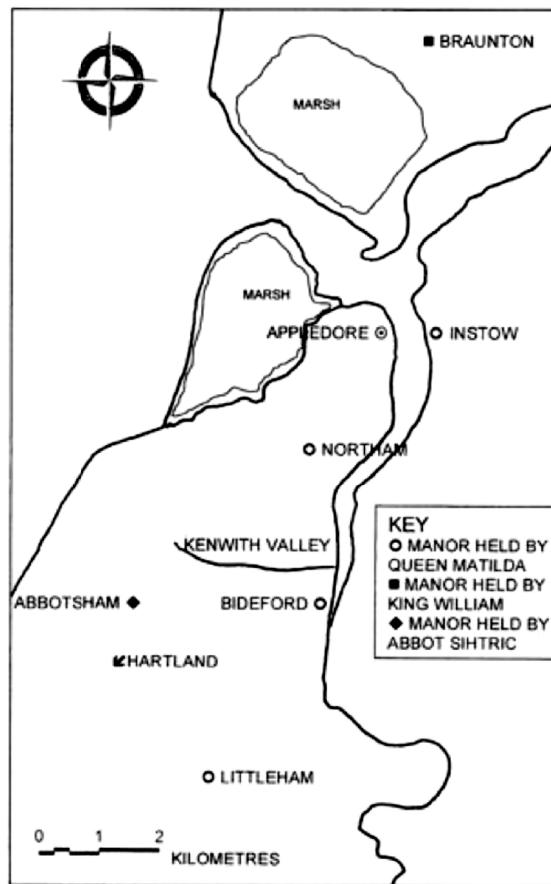


Figure 2. Manors around the Taw/Torridge estuary in 1069 (map by the author).

Thomas Girtin's view of Appledore painted in 1796 shows ships doing just this and the only surviving section of beach at SS465320 is firm gravelly sand (see Fig. 3). In summary the identification of Appledore as the landing place supports the conclusion of Baker and Brookes that Viking era fleets preferred to land in sheltered water and established landing places (Baker and Brookes. 2013, p. 175). In addition to a safe place to leave the ships, a landing at Appledore offered opportunities to plunder royal land (Fig. 2) and William of Jumièges reported that the sons of Harold were plundering when Brian attacked (William of Jumièges, 1995, pp. 180-181). In 1069 Appledore was part of the manor of Northam held by Queen Matilda, wife of King William (Thorn and Thorn, 1985, Devon, 1, 12.1). The queen also held Bideford and Littleham and probably Instow on the opposite bank of the River Torridge (Thorn and Thorn, 1985, Devon, 1, 1.60, 1.61, 24.26) (Fig. 2). If *Quedam Exceptiones* is correct in suggesting that the raid targeted the borders of Devon and Cornwall, it is relevant that Northam is the only manor in the estuary with access to the road that led to Hartland, a road mentioned in a mid-twelfth century charter (Finberg, 1947, pp. 201-202). Alongside access to plunder, came the need to defend the ships and a line of retreat. In 1066 Duke William based his army on the Hastings peninsula. Northam is also a peninsula bounded to the east by the River Torridge, to

the west and north by the sea and to the south by the marshy Kenwith valley. In the words of Westcote, Northam was: 'a promontory or head-land, or half-island' (Westcote, 1845, p. 342).



Figure 3. Only a small portion of beach survives at Appledore. It is still used to beach boats (photo by the author).

Northam was also next to land held by a potential ally. In 1069 Tavistock Abbey held the manor of Abbotsham (Thorn and Thorn, 1985, Devon, 1, 5.6), which adjoined Northam to the west (Fig. 2), and Orleigh and Annery in the Parish of Littleham. Between 1066 and 1067 Abbot Sihtric of Tavistock purchased Gytha's manor of Werrington in Cornwall without royal permission (Finberg, 1969, pp. 6-7) and this money might well have formed part of the 'great store of treasure' that Gytha 'secretly gathered together' (Orderic Vitalis, 1990, pp. 224-225) and perhaps used to fund the sons of Harold. Around 1125 William of Malmesbury accused Sihtric of 'piracy' (*piraticam*) (William of Malmesbury, 2007, pp. 318-319). Although this sounds farfetched because the Abbot retained his position (Finberg, 1969, pp. 8-9), Jumièges described the sons of Harold as plundering in 1069 'like most dangerous pirates' (*more seuissimorum piratarum*) (William of Jumièges, 1995, pp.180-181) and Malmesbury's accusation would have made sense if the sons of Harold had landed next to Sihtric's manor and he was suspected of being in league with them. Interestingly, the two documented landings the sons of Harold made in 1068 were close to lands held by clerical allies of the family. Seyer placed their first landing at Shirehampton or Sea Mills (Seyer, 1821, p. 284) close to Westbury-on-Trym held by Wulfstan of Worcester and Ealdred of York (Morris, 1982, Gloucestershire, 3.1; Williams, 2005, p. 26). Their second landing was close to Bleadon, held by Archbishop Stigand in his capacity as Bishop of

Winchester and supposedly given by Gytha (Thorn and Thorn, 1980, Somerset, 2.11; Williams, 2011, p. 249).

Brian son of Eudo and William de Vauville

All the sources agree that Brian, whom Jumièges describes as a son of Count Eudo of the Bretons, defeated the sons of Harold (William of Jumièges, 1995, pp. 180-181). This Eudo was Count of Penthièvre, a prominent Breton noble and cousin of King William's father. Brian probably fought at Hastings in the Breton contingent alongside his brother Alan Rufus and King William granted him lands in Suffolk (Keats-Rohan, 1999, pp. 47-48). Although the *Chronicle* refers to Brian as "Earl" (Swanton, 2000, p. 203) and Brian's nephew styled his uncle as 'Earl of Cornwall' in a charter of 1140, there is no contemporary evidence for this title. Nevertheless it appears that Brian did hold land in Cornwall because by 1086 most Cornish manors were held by Robert of Mortain (Golding, 1991, p. 126) and Robert also held Brian's Suffolk manors (Morris, 1985, Suffolk, 1 and 2, 2.5-2.6). It is likely that Brian based himself at Launceston Castle, which Saunders dated from the later 1060's, (Saunders, A., 2006, pp. 27-29, p. 57), and later thirteenth century tradition suggests that Brian gave land to the nearby leper hospital of St Leonard (Orme, 2010, p.221). *Quedam Exceptiones* reports that Brian led an army of (Breton) compatriots (*compatriotarum exercitu*) (William of Jumièges, 1995, p. 304) and although it is not possible to identify these men, they may well have included the Bretons Brian of Widemouth and Blohin the Breton. In 1086, unlike the known followers of Robert of Mortain, both men held land only in Cornwall (Thorn and Thorn, 1978, Cornwall, 5.9.1-4 and 5.25.1-5).

If Orderic is correct and de Vauville was joint-commander with Brian, there is a plausible explanation for his presence. In the Domesday Book de Vauville is reported as acquiring royal lands (Thorn and Thorn, 1985, Devon, 1 and 2, 1.15, 3.32) and Green suggested that he was the sheriff of Devon (Green, 2002, p. 63). As sheriff, de Vauville would have been responsible for summoning the Devonshire fyrd (Morillo, 1994, p. 69). The presence of the fyrd explains why Brian had a large army (Swanton, 2000, p. 203), an *unlytlan weorode* (Jebson, 1996-2006, 1068) as the *Chronicle* describes it, numerous enough to kill most of the large army gathered by the sons of Harold (William of Jumièges, 1995, pp. 180-181).

Two battles in one day

William of Jumièges states that the sons of Harold were defeated in two battles fought in a single day. Perhaps surprisingly it is possible to reconstruct the events of that day. According to the *Chronicle* the sons of Harold landed unwarily (*unwoelice up eodon*) (Jebson, 1996-2006, 1068), that is they did not send scouts to reconnoitre the area. Poitiers presents reconnaissance as good practice and tells us that King William personally undertook this job on a number of occasions (Gillingham, 1992, p. 156), notably on landing at Pevensey in 1066 (William of Poitiers, 1998, pp. 114-117). It is not certain why the sons of Harold did not undertake a similar reconnaissance but clearly they were not expecting the attack that followed.

In the eleventh century it was usual for ships to arrive and depart close to high tide and to be anchored or tied to the shore – or as Wace imaginatively described the Norman landing in 1066: 'all (the ships) reached shore together. All lay together, all anchored together, all

beached together, and all were unloaded together' (Bennett, 1992, p. 238). The Bayeux Tapestry shows five images of this kind of embarkation or disembarkation, the first three show Harold's trip to Ponthieu and his return from Normandy, the next is the arrival of news of Harold's coronation and the final scene is William's landing at Pevensey. At Appledore it would have been essential to arrive and leave at high tide since the ships would have been immobile until high tide and the sand bar at the entrance to the estuary, which Leland described as dangerous (John Leland, 1907, p. 299), is only navigable around this time. As Table 1 shows, there were less than thirteen hours between disembarkation and embarkation.

Date	Morning high tide	Time of sunset	Evening high tide	Civil dusk
24/6	7.23 am	8.33 pm	7.45 pm	9.18 pm
25/6	8.02 am	8.33 pm	8.24 pm	9.18 pm
26/6	8.39 am	8.33 pm	9.03 pm	9.18 pm
27/6	9.19 am	8.33 pm	9.45 pm	9.18 pm
28/6	10.04 am	8.32 pm	10.33 pm	9.17 pm

Table 1. GMT times of high tide and civil dusk at Appledore adjusted for the Julian calendar. Tide and sunset times are from easytide.com. Civil dusk times for Exeter are from timeanddate.com adjusted for Appledore (+3 minutes). The dusk data is based on a clear sky. In the event of overcast conditions civil dusk would have been earlier.

All the sources suggest that Brian's army reached the battlefield quickly. In the *Chronicle's* account Brian's attack follows the report of the landing. After describing the plundering, William of Jumièges states that Brian attacked immediately (*protinus*) (William of Jumièges, 1995, pp. 180-181) and Orderic suggests that the raiders had just started pillaging: 'they began to lay waste the land' (*progredientes a littore terram audacius depopulari ceperunt*) when Brian and William de Vauville attacked immediately (*Protinus*) (Orderic Vitalis, 1990, pp. 224-225). In the eleventh century defending armies often confronted invaders close to their ships – Harold's landing at Porlockin 1052 (Swanton, 2000, p. 178), Bleadon in 1068, and Ralph de Gael's battle in 1069 are battles of this type. Presumably Brian's army was close to the landing site and attacked soon after the landing. If the raiders were pillaging it would help explain how according to the *Chronicle*, Brian was able to launch a surprise attack. Morillo notes that a foraging or plundering enemy was vulnerable to surprise (Morillo, 1994, p.133) and the attack on Edgar Atheling's men by the garrison of Lincoln in 1069 is an example of this type of action (Orderic, 1990, pp. 226-227). The report that the raiders were pillaging suggests that they were spread out across the landscape in small groups, since this is how eleventh century armies pillaged (Gillingham, 1992, pp. 154-155) and they cannot have got far because they were not marching in any one direction. The rapid appearance of Brian's army clearly limited the area of pillaging and perhaps this is why, in contrast to 1068 when the sons of Harold landed at the mouth of the Avon and 'raided all across that region', the *Chronicle* author felt no

need to mention the pillaging or how far the raiders travelled. This could also explain why unlike the pattern of devalued manors around Bristol, (Morris, 1982, Gloucestershire, 1.21, 5.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 75.1, 78.13) and the manors wasted by Irishmen in south Devon, Northam did not alter in value between 1066 and 1086 (Thorn and Thorn, 1985, Devon, 1, 12.1). Whilst this evidence is hardly persuasive, it is worth noting that Bleadon, where the sons of Harold fought a battle in 1068, and Uphill, where they probably landed (Rutter, 1829, p. 84), did not lose value either (Thorn and Thorn, 1980, Somerset, 2.11, 37.2).

The first battle did not destroy the raiders as a fighting force and they were able to fight a second battle that continued until night put an end to the fighting (*nox prelium diremisset*) (William of Jumièges, 1995, pp. 182-183). It is likely that most of their casualties were suffered in this more prolonged battle. The length of the second battle was unusual since, with the exception of the nine hours of fighting at Hastings, early medieval battles rarely lasted more than an hour or two (Morillo, 1996, pp. 220-221). However the sons of Harold had to make a stand because they were unable to escape until high tide. The *Chronicle* states that the battles took place around June 24th and Jumièges' report that night put an end to the battle implies that high tide was close to or later than civil dusk (the time at which light levels become insufficient for outside activities). Taking these factors into account, the battle probably took place on June 26th, the day on which civil dusk was closest to high tide (Table 1). The willingness of the raiders to risk crossing the bar after dark reinforces the impression given by the sources of a desperate flight.

All the sources agree that the raiders suffered heavy casualties. Jumièges put their losses at 1,700 warriors, which sounds plausible, adding that if the battle had lasted longer all of them would have been killed. According to the *Chronicle*, the survivors fled to their ships with 'little company' (*lytlan werode*) (Jebson, 1996-2006, 1068). Although neither of Harold's sons was reported as killed, the sources agree that the raiders lost their leading men. Jumièges states that the dead included 'some magnates of the realm' (*nonnullis regni proceribus*) whilst the *Chronicle* notes that they lost all their 'best men' (*þa betstan menn*) (Jebson, 1996-2006, 1068). Presumably Brian's forces suffered too, but we are not told about these losses.

The location of the battles of 1069

It is likely that Brian's army advanced along the main road (Fig. 4). Today the A386 leads north from Bideford to Northam across what was formerly the marshy mouth of the Kenwith stream. In 1439 this route was a causeway (Oliver, 1840, pp. 39-40) but even if the causeway existed in 1069 it might not have been suitable for a large army. A more convincing main road in 1069 was the lane that crosses the Kenwith Valley further west at the undated earthwork known as Godborough Castle (Historic Environment Record Devon and Dartmoor. MDV474). Although there is no dating evidence for this lane it appears in the Greenwoods' map of 1827 (Greenwood, C., and J., 1834, Devonshire), which shows it connecting with the road from Brian's likely *caput* of Launceston to Bideford. This road is mentioned in a tenth century charter (Hooke, 1994, p. 146). Although there is no evidence of the high road from Northam to Appledore in 1069, a grant of 1396 shows that it occupied the same position as the modern A386 from Northam to the Bidna Ridge (Maxwell Lyte, 1915, C.6718) and Bowen's map of 1754

suggests that thereafter the road lead along what is now Pitt Lane into Appledore (Carter, 2000, p. 47).

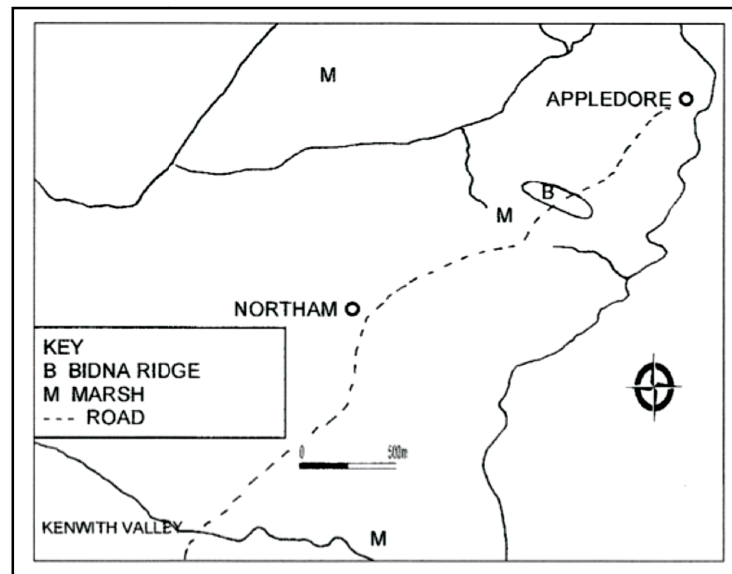


Figure 4. Northam in 1069 showing the likely road to Appledore (map by the author).

The location of the first battle is unclear but since the area of pillaging was limited, it probably took place in Northam parish, and most likely around Northam village. In 1069 the village was the population centre (Thorn and Thorn, 1985, Devon, 1, 12.1) and doubtless the focus of the plundering of local people (*terre populum*) reported by Jumièges (William of Jumièges, 1995, pp. 180-181). An advance by Brian's forces would have been hidden by higher ground to the south and west, making possible the surprise attack noted by the *Chronicle*. According to *Quedam Exceptiones* the raiders were put to flight in each of the two battles (*bis prelium conserentes fugam inierunt*; William of Jumièges, 1995, p. 304). The second battle cannot have been fought at the ships because they were in a separate location. According to Jumièges' the raiders fled from the second battlefield (*certamine fugientes*) before escaping with their ships (William of Jumièges, 1995, pp. 182-183) and the *Chronicle* concurs, reporting that the raiders fled to their ships (Swanton, 2000, p. 203) (*to scypum oetflugon*) (Jebson, 1996-2006, 1068). Therefore the second battle occurred between the first battlefield and the ships. The correlation between civil dusk and high tide suggests that the second battle was fought a few minutes away from Appledore.

It is tempting to envisage the second battle as a second albeit smaller Hastings, with a shield wall under prolonged attack and veterans of Hastings fighting on both sides. At Hastings a slope protected Harold's army and the duration of the second battle suggests that Harold's sons also found a defensible position. The only obvious site is the Bidna Ridge (Figs 4 and 5), which crosses the peninsula from west to east. The road from Northam to Appledore leads over the ridge and the position was protected on its Northam side by the watershed of two streams (Greenwood, C., and J., 1834, Devonshire) and an area called *ploddy* meaning waterlogged land

(Gover, *et al.*, Part I, 1969, p. 48). This area is named in a deed of 1520 (Maxwell Lyte, 1915, C. 7149), and is identifiable as field names in the tithe map of 1838 (Northam Tithe Apportionment (1838), NDRO, 1843A/PB 19). The area where the road crosses this land is today known as 'Marshford' and was *Le Mersch* in 1447 (Gover, *et al.*, Part I, 1969, p. 103).



Figure 5. The Bidna Ridge. The valley was formerly marshy ground. The road from Northam to Appledore is visible as the line of streetlights (photo by the author).

If this identification is correct, the nearby place names of 'Bloody Corner' and 'Bone Hill' may be significant, although both should be treated with caution. There is no evidence of any battle traditions before 1806 in the case of Bloody Corner (Vidal, 1806, p. 207) and there is a competing legend reported in 1874 that the stone at the bend bled in wet weather (NDJ, 20/8/74). The earliest reference to a battle tradition at Bone Hill is not until 1850 (Cottle, 1850, p. 495) although this hillock next to Northam Church and overlooking the sea might be a burial site. The large quantity of 'human remains' found close to the chapel at Appledore in 1836 (BMMR, 10, 1836, p. 243) could also be related to the battles.

The aftermath of the battle

Jumièges and the *Chronicle* agree that the sons of Harold returned to Ireland to report their losses (William of Jumièges, 1995, pp. 182-183; Swanton, 2000, p. 203). Raids from Ireland continued into the 1080's but the threat receded in 1070 when plague killed Murchad and in 1072 King Dairnat was defeated and executed by his enemy Conchobar Ua Máil Shechnaill (Hudson, 2005, p. 162). The fate of Harold's sons is unknown but later sources suggest they took refuge at the Danish court with their grandmother, aunt and sister (Barlow, 2005, p. 169). Presuming these reports are correct, the sons of Harold might have sailed to Denmark in the

Skuldelev 2 vessel, which according to dendrochronology, was built in Ireland around 1042 (Hudson, 2005, p. 158).

According to Orderic, in the late summer of 1069 King William ordered Brian and William FitzOsbern to defend Shrewsbury from rebels. In Brian's absence local rebels attacked Exeter but were driven off by a surprise sally by the garrison. Brian and William returned to scatter the west-country rebels (Orderic Vitalis, 1990, pp. 228-229). Despite his victories in 1069, the following year the king granted Brian's lands to Robert of Mortain. Brian apparently returned to his family in Brittany because he is named alongside his brother Geoffrey Boterel in two charters in 1086 (Keats-Rohan, 1991, p. 160). None of this explains why Brian lost his lands but Wilmart plausibly suggested that he might have been injured and left an invalid (Keats-Rohan, 1999, p. 160).

Brian's departure was followed by changes in regional defence. Baldwin of Meules, who was related by marriage to Robert of Mortain, replaced William de Vauville as Sheriff of Devon and castellan of Exeter Castle (Green, 2002, p. 64). Around 1071 compact lordships were established in various parts of the kingdom. The Bishop of Coutances held a cluster of manors around Bristol, which look like a reaction to the raid of 1068 and a comparable cluster around Barnstaple (Green, 2002, pp. 50-51, p. 67) might be a response to the 1069 raid.

The manor of Northam after 1069

Queen Matilda took a personal interest in north Devon. She enabled her priest Saewin, probably a priest on the royal estate of South Molton, to take over his uncle's manor of Swimbridge (Thorn and Thorn, 1985, Devon, 1 and 2, 13a.2) and she made a very unusual gift of land in alms to an English layman named Alward Mart (properly Alweard) (Thorn and Thorn, 1985, Devon, 1 and 2, 52.30). This was probably the Alward who formerly held the queen's manor of Instow (Thorn and Thorn, 1985, Devon, 1 and 2, 24.26), because Alward Mart held land from Walter Claville, who held Instow (and several other of the queen's manors in 1086). At some point before her death in 1083, the queen granted Northam to her husband's abbey of St Stephen in Caen. Whilst this might have been a random act of piety, the queen's interest in the area suggests something more deliberate. A confirmatory charter drawn up in 1156 or 1157 states that the queen gave Northam to St Stephen's during her last illness (Round, 1899, Charter 453, p. 157). The original charter has been lost but the grant is noted in two charters listing the lands of St. Stephen's Abbey. The earlier charter is a draft of the later one. The later charter was drawn up at some time between 1083 and 1087 (Bates, 1998, Charter 54 pp. 258-263). The later charter bears the non-autograph *signum* of Bishop Hugh of Lisieux who died in 1077 but because the *signum* is missing from the earlier charter Musson argued that there must have been a second draft created in Bishop Hugh's lifetime and therefore the earlier charter dates from some point between 1066 and 1077 (Bates, 1998, Charter 45 pp. 215-219). However, if the omission of the *signum* is regarded as an error in the draft charter, the difficulty disappears and we can date both charters to the 1080's and the grant of Northam to the queen's last illness in 1083. The only other instance of the queen granting English land to St Stephen's is a grant of two unidentified hides in Dorset, apparently close to the manor of Frampton, which was given to St Stephen's by the king (Thorn and Thorn, 1983, Dorset, 17.1). The twelfth-century confirmatory charter does not suggest the queen gave these two hides in

her last illness and she probably made this gift around the time her husband gave St Stephen's the manors of Frampton and nearby Bincombe (Thorn and Thorn, 1983, Dorset, 17.2).

According to Orderic when the queen was on her deathbed: '...she confessed her sins with bitter tears' and died after 'fully accomplishing all that Christian tradition required.' (Orderic Vitalis, 1973, pp. 44-45). Assuming the contention of this paper is correct, the grant of Northam to an abbey that King William had founded for the benefit of his own soul looks like an act of atonement for the loss of life in the battles. The grant might be compared to King William's grant of the battlefield of Hastings to Battle Abbey (Bates, 2008, p. 222). The battles might also explain a cult that developed in the area. According to a list of saints' burial places written sometime between 1180 and 1230, there were two churches facing one another across the River Torridge. One was Instow church and the other was the chapel at Appledore. According to the list, a Welsh saint named John was beheaded in Appledore and miraculously picked up his head and walked across the river to be buried at Instow (Blair, 2002, p. 489). In 1086 the priest at Instow was important enough to rate a mention in Domesday Book (Thorn and Thorn, 1985, Devon, 1 and 2, 24.26) and by 1252 the Instow saint had evidentially become identified with St John the Baptist because from this date Northam fair was celebrated on the feast of the decollation of John the Baptist (August 29th) (Lysons and Lysons, 1822, Northam, pp. 360-369). As John of Worcester points out, the battles of 1069 occurred close to the nativity of St John the Baptist (24th June) (John of Worcester, 1998, pp. 8-9) and it is possible that the cult developed because the saint was credited with the victory.

Conclusions

Although the English and Norman chroniclers apparently never read each other's work, their accounts are remarkably consistent and fit in well with the tide and dusk data. The only glaring contradiction is the differing landing sites proposed by the *Chronicle* and Orderic. By locating the battles at Northam, it is to be hoped that a clearer understanding of the raid and its significance may be achieved.

William of Jumièges and the author of *Quedam Exceptiones* presented the defeat of the sons of Harold as the climax of their narratives of the Conquest, making surprisingly little reference to the other events of 1068 and 1069 in which King William was personally involved. Not only were the battles seen as significant, but they were remarkable in their own right since it was unheard of to fight two battles in one day. In retrospect the crushing defeat of the sons of Harold ended all hopes of the Godwin family retrieving any of their former power. Given this fact and the evident importance that contemporaries attached to the battles, it is scarcely appropriate to regard the battles as a historical footnote. It is only with hindsight that we can judge the sons of Harold as ineffective, and perhaps if they had made a proper reconnaissance in 1069 history would have taken a very different course.

Abbreviations

BMMR The British Magazine and Monthly Register.

NDJ North Devon Journal.

NDRO North Devon Records Office, Barnstaple.

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The Battle of Radcot Bridge, 2-3 May, 1645

By: Gregg Archer

Abstract

The events of the English Civil War that took place in late April 1645, during Cromwell's 'raid' around Oxford, helped cement Oliver Cromwell's reputation as an excellent commander of horse. Due to the Self-Denying Ordinance his military future prior to the raid was somewhat in doubt, however, the results of his operations around the royalist capital at Oxford contributed to his confirmation as the Lieutenant General of the New Model Army cavalry. The skirmishes around Oxford at Islip Bridge, Bampton and Radcot Bridge were militarily insignificant, but the wider effects and repercussions for both the royalist and parliamentary causes during the middle part of 1645, were much larger than the battles that were fought. This article seeks to examine one of those skirmishes – Radcot Bridge – in detail, in an attempt to outline a coherent narrative of events from the few extant sources on the battle. Although a defeat for Cromwell, the following narrative seeks to explain how the victory influenced the royalist strategy for the summer campaign to the detriment of their cause and how Cromwell's success led to his appointment. Finally, its purpose is to explain how these events helped bring disaster to the Oxford Army at the battle of Naseby; the beginning of the end for the royalist cause in the First Civil War.

Introduction and Historical Background

The battle of Radcot Bridge was the final skirmish of Oliver Cromwell's raid around Oxford which commenced in the last week of April 1645. The raid grew out of Parliament's desire to relieve the pressure on the West Country garrison of Taunton and distract royalist efforts to relieve the siege at Chester, until the newly formed New Model Army had completed its preparations and could take to the field. By the beginning of 1645 the royalists largely controlled the West Country, most of Wales and some parts of the Midlands. However, excepting some isolated garrisons, the north of England had been lost at the Battle of Marston Moor (July 1644). Wales had also been threatened after the battle of Montgomery (September 1644), although the royalists re-established their position in early 1645 except in the South West, from where Parliament's General Rowland Laugharne was advancing northwards from Pembroke. Laugharne's run of success was eventually halted by General Charles Gerard, but this was still some time in the future.

Although fluid, the royalist plan for 1645 was to relieve the siege of Chester and send Lord George Goring to a new command in the West, with orders to prosecute the siege of Taunton. King Charles sent his nephews, Princes Rupert and Maurice, to relieve Chester with a view to joining them with the rest of his army and his artillery train once his forces were concentrated at Oxford. Once this had been achieved, the combined armies would launch a campaign in the north.¹

¹ A. Woolrych, *Battles of the Civil War* (London, Pan Books Ltd: 1969), 104

Parliament's early 1645 strategy was shaped by its need to react to the movements of these royalist forces. Whilst the New Model Army was to achieve the decisive victory at Naseby in June, in April it was still not ready to engage the king's Oxford Army. Sir Thomas Fairfax's commission as General of the New Model was not granted until 1 April and he did not arrive at Windsor, where the army was being formed, until the third of that month. It would take time – most of April in fact – to order the new army and in the meantime the royalists had to be prevented from or disrupted in launching their summer campaign.²

On 17 April Lieutenant General Oliver Cromwell arrived at Windsor having returned from the West, where in company with Sir William Waller, he had been sparring against a royalist army led by his future nemesis of Radcot Bridge, George, Lord Goring. At this point in his career Cromwell was the Lieutenant General of Horse of the Eastern Association Army. This army had ceased to exist with the passing of the New Model Ordinance in February 1645 and under the terms of the December 1644 Self-Denying Ordinance, Cromwell, along with any other military officer in the army who were also members of Parliament, was required to resign his commission.

Cromwell was born in 1599 at Huntingdon in Cambridgeshire. Educated at Cambridge University, he became a Member of Parliament in 1628 and again served in both the Short and Long Parliaments of 1640.³ Despite his later fame, Cromwell was merely a captain of a troop of horse at the beginning of the Civil War. A Colonel by 1643, his reputation was bolstered in the middle of 1644 by the accounts of his success at Marston Moor, where Cromwell served as Lieutenant General of the Eastern Association Horse. By mid-April 1645 however, the Self Denying Ordinance had left Cromwell's further military career in some doubt and the decision to allow him to lead the raid around Oxford, his first independent command, was only made possible by making an exception to the ordinance and extending his commission.

Prelude to the Battle

Cromwell had originally travelled to Windsor to resign his commission and hand over the Eastern Association horse to the new army, but it was evident that Fairfax wanted Cromwell to be the Lieutenant General of Horse of the New Model. Parliament also found Cromwell's services indispensable, although to appoint him would have been politically difficult at a time when other generals were resigning. Nevertheless, Cromwell commanded the only large formed body of horse in the south and was thus ideally placed to respond to the current situation. Parliament avoided the resignation issue by extending his command for a further period of time in order to launch the raid against Oxford and the royalist supply lines.⁴ On 20 April, the Committee of Both Kingdoms sent their instructions to the General:

The Committee of both kingdoms to Lieut.-Genl. Cromwell.

² J. Sprigg, *Anglia Rediviva; England's Recovery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1854) ,10-11

³ F. Kitson, *Old Ironsides; The Military Biography of Oliver Cromwell* , (London: Wiedenfeld & Nicolson, 2004), 20

⁴ S.R. Gardiner, *History of the Great Civil War, Vol II 1644-45* (Moreton-in-the-Marsh: The Windrush Press, 2002), 20; F. S. Memegalos, *George Goring (1608-1657), Caroline Courtier and Royalist General* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2007), 242; Sprigg, *Anglia Rediviva*, 11-12

Being informed that the enemy have mounted their ordnance at Oxford, and that Prince Maurice is come thither with 1,000 horse to convey his Majesty and those ordnance to join with the forces of the two Princes in Hereford and Worcester shires, and considering of what advantage it would be to the public to prevent this design of the enemy, we have thought fit to employ in that service your two regiments, Col. Fiennes' and the rest of that party which went with you into the west. We therefore desire you to take those forces into your charge, and marching the nearest way for interposing between the party from Oxford and the forces about Hereford and Worcester, to hinder the passing of those ordnance and to take all advantages you can against the enemy for the public good. We desire you also to hold correspondence with Major-Genl. Browne and Col. Massie, who will be ready to take all occasions to advance this service.⁵

In order to 'hinder' the king's artillery train, Cromwell was to round up as many draught horses as he could, as without them the train would be stuck at Oxford and the royalist Oxford Army would not be able to join forces with the two princes. Instructions were also sent to Edward Massey, the parliamentarian governor of Gloucester and his counterpart Major-General Browne at Abingdon to co-operate with Cromwell in the Oxford area. Leaving Windsor, Cromwell advanced via Reading and Caversham Bridge to a rendezvous at Watlington on 23 April.⁶ On the same day the army in Wales under Charles Gerard surprised Laugharne's army at Newcastle Emlyn and crushed it, driving the parliamentarian general back into his strongholds of Pembroke and Tenby and thus securing South West Wales again for the king.⁷

Cromwell set out from Watlington on the same day. On the 24 April he arrived at Islip and routed a brigade of horse under the Earl of Northampton. The next day he summoned Bletchington House to surrender. Having no artillery his demand was pure bluff, but the house was surrendered immediately under articles. The unfortunate garrison commander – Colonel Francis Windebank – was shot the next day in Oxford for his failure to defend the house.⁸

⁵ *Calendar of State Papers Domestic (CSPD), Charles I, 1644-45*, (London: HMSO, 1890), 417-18

⁶ J. Barratt, *Cavalier Capital, Oxford in the English Civil War 1642-46*, (Solihull: Helion & Company, 2015), 148.

⁷ R. Hutton *The Royalist War Effort*, (London: Routledge, 2003), 174

⁸ *An Abstract of a letter from Lieutenant-Generall Cromwell to Sir Thomas Fairfax* (British Library:BL/TT/E279(7), 1645.



Figure 1: Oliver Cromwell. His spectacular success during his raid around Oxford in 1645 severely hampered the royalist summer campaign. Portrait by: John Vicars (1845). *England's Worthies. Under Whom all the Civil and Bloudy Warres Anno 1642-1647*, printed for John Russell.

Proceeding via Middleton Stoney and Witney, Cromwell was able to surprise Sir Henry Vaughan's entire regiment at Bampton-in-the-Bush on 28 April, as it was returning to Faringdon. After a two day skirmish the regiment was penned in Bampton Castle and forced to surrender.⁹ The parliamentarians followed up this victory by crossing the Thames at Radcot and occupying Faringdon. The royalist garrison in the town was situated at Faringdon House. In a well-known exchange Cromwell summoned the acting Governor, Lieutenant-Colonel Roger Burges, to surrender; but he was made of sterner stuff than Windebank and the summons was refused. Having been reinforced by some foot and guns from Abingdon, an attack on the house was launched on 30 April, but this time the parliamentarians were driven off with some loss.¹⁰ Following the assault Cromwell quartered his men about Faringdon and on 2 May rode off to Newbury to confer with Sir Thomas Fairfax, who had brought the New Model Army westwards and was at that time encamped around the Berkshire town. Whilst there Cromwell learned that a royalist army was in the vicinity of Faringdon and was threatening his own quarters about the town.¹¹

⁹ T. Carlyle, *Oliver Cromwells letter and Speeches, Volume IV* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1903), 225-29

¹⁰ Carlyle, *Oliver Cromwells letter and Speeches*, 162; M. Aulicus, 'Mercurius Aulicus; Communicating the Intelligence and affaires of the Court, to the rest of the kingdome', in: *The English Revolution III, Newsbooks I, Oxford Royalist*, Volume 4. Ed. by R. Jeffs, et al., (London: Cornmarket Press, 1971), 1571; J. Rushworth, *Historical Collections, Abridg'd and Improv'd. From January 1642 to April 1646*, Vol. V (London, 1708), 522-23

¹¹ Memegalos, *George Goring*, 248

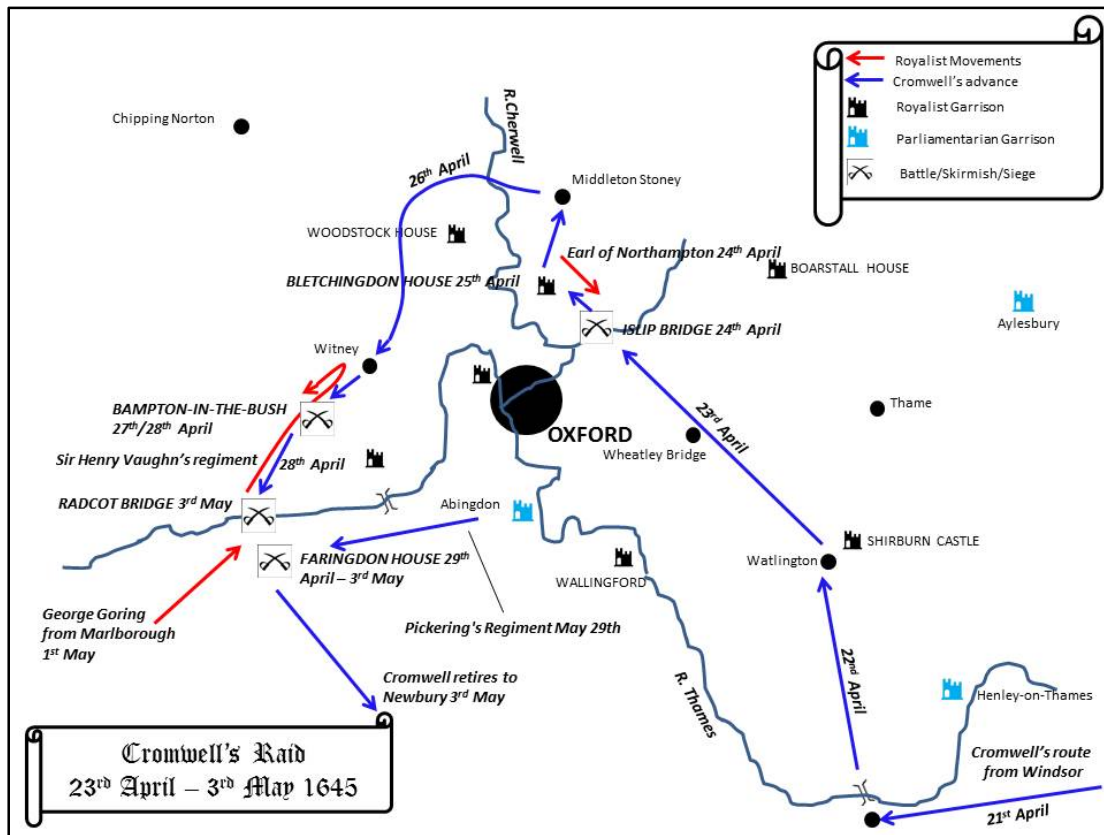


Figure 2: Cromwell's Oxford – April to May 1645, (map by the author).

The opposition

The commander of this small royalist army, and the man who would defeat Cromwell at Radcot was George, Lord Goring; born in 1608, the son of George Goring, Earl of Norwich (created 1644). Like Cromwell he was educated in Cambridge and his father-in-law, the Earl of Cork, purchased a commission for him in 1633 as a Colonel of the regiment formally belonging to Horace, Lord Vere in the Dutch army. Goring distinguished himself in the Dutch Wars but was wounded in the ankle at the siege of Breda in 1637 and retired. Commanding at Portsmouth in the summer of 1642 he declared for the king, but was blockaded and forced to surrender. After joining the Queen on the continent he returned with her to Yorkshire and was made General of Horse in the Earl of Newcastle's Northern Army. A brilliant commander of cavalry, he routed Sir Thomas Fairfax at Seacroft Moor in March 1643, but was then captured at Wakefield, where he commanded the garrison, lying ill in bed. Exchanged in early 1644 he successfully commanded the left wing of royalist horse at Marston Moor and again routed Fairfax, although ultimate victory went to the allied parliamentary and Scots armies. Following the loss of the North he was made General of the Horse of the Oxford army following the dismissal of Lord Wilmot in August 1644. In November he was given a command in the West where he halted the advance of Waller and Cromwell before being recalled to Oxford in April 1645. Goring's chief faults

were his pride, a love of intrigue and a fondness for drink which combined with ill health, were to cloud his later years of command.¹²

The town of Taunton had been besieged by royalist forces in the latter months of 1644. This first siege was eventually relieved by a force under Major General James Holbourne on 14 December.¹³ A second siege was initiated in March 1645 by the local royalist forces, which were joined by a part of the Exeter garrison under Sir John Berkeley. These were augmented by Sir Richard Grenville's force from Plymouth on 2 April and later by Goring's own foot, under Sir Joseph Wagstaffe. Grenville was severely wounded early in the siege and Berkeley took over command. Goring, who had previously been campaigning in Surrey and who had moved west to help the local royalists in Dorset, was now obliged to defend the Wiltshire/Dorset border against Waller and Cromwell who had followed him.¹⁴ A series of inconclusive skirmishes happened in Dorset and Somerset as Goring sought to counter the parliamentary advance. Although Goring was unable to defeat the two commanders in the field, he was at least able to stop them from relieving Taunton. Goring's own problems were exacerbated when his foot were ordered to Taunton to help press the siege and he retired to his headquarters at Wells on 12 April. At the same time Waller and Cromwell were recalled to Windsor, as Parliament sought to implement the Self-Denying Ordinance. Waller resigned his command, but Cromwell was retained and ordered to raid around Oxford.¹⁵

¹² S. C. Manganiello, *The Concise Encyclopaedia of the Revolutions and Wars of England, Scotland and Ireland* (Maryland, Lanham: Scarecrow Press Inc., 2004), 238

¹³ CSPD, *Charles I 1644-45*, 113, 124, 196; M. Wanklyn and F. Jones, *A Military History of the English Civil War* (Edinburgh: Pearson Education Ltd, 2005), 209

¹⁴ Memegalos, *George Goring*, 222-28

¹⁵ Gardiner, *History of the Great Civil War, Vol II 1644-45*, 182-183; Memegalos, *George Goring*, 229-37; Kitson, *Old Ironsides*, 106-7



Figure 3: George, Lord Goring. A superb cavalry General whose later years as General of the West were clouded by ill health and disputes with his superiors (*George, Lord Goring*, after the original by Anthony van Dyke, 1639, oil on canvas).

Whilst Goring was quartered with his troops between Bath and Marshfield, towards the end of April he began to receive letters from Oxford with new orders to march towards the king. Cromwell's early success in his raid had immobilised the Oxford Army and as such there were no major forces in the field to counter him. The first instruction on 27 April ordered Goring to advance with 2,000 horse to Faringdon to assist the garrison against Cromwell's expected advance.¹⁶ However, the destruction of Sir Henry Vaughan's regiment at Bampton on 28 April altered the situation enough for the royalists to be concerned that Goring himself might be overwhelmed if he did not have sufficient strength to counter Cromwell. Digby drafted a fresh letter on 28 April asking Goring to be 'suddenly here with such a strength as may safely convoy the King and his train within reach of Prince Rupert's forces', who were in Herefordshire in late April. Goring was also asked to bring as many draught horses as he could.¹⁷ Furthermore, the king required him to 'hasten with all possible speed and take the forces that before Taunton with [him] to march against Fairfax'.¹⁸ In order to move quickly Goring was only able to take a large body of horse, as the foot could not cover the marching distance to Faringdon in time to stop Cromwell. Although the initial orders were quite clear that Goring was to assist the garrison at Faringdon, the revised orders stressed that assisting

¹⁶ Memegalos, *George Goring*, 243

¹⁷ Bodleian Library, *A Composite Volume of Letter and Paper of the Earl of Clarendon*. (Clarendon MS. 24 (134). (Digby, for King Charles to Goring, 28 April 1645).

¹⁸ Bodleian, Clarendon MS. 24 (130). (Goring to Culpeper, 28/29 April 1645).

the king at Oxford was now the priority. Goring returned to Wells on 29 April and prepared to march. In short, he had been given royal orders and 'there was no remedy but he must obey them'.¹⁹ Goring left Wells the next day.

Goring's exact route of march is difficult to establish. He planned to cover the 40 miles to Marlborough on the first day which would bring him somewhere between Faringdon and Oxford on the second.²⁰ A route north through Bath would probably have been difficult due to the parliamentarian garrison at Malmesbury. The most obvious route would have been north-east through Frome and Trowbridge. From there Goring could pass through Devizes which was held by a strong royalist garrison and then march straight through to Marlborough. A captured royalist messenger believed 'Goring is about the Devizes',²¹ on 28 April but the information could not be confirmed and was, in any case incorrect, as he remained north of Bath on that date. Whichever route Goring used, he and his men did arrive at Marlborough on 30 April, which was confirmed by a number of parliamentarian news-sheets one of which stated: 'that Colonell Goring hath drawn a party of horse and foot from before Taunton... and marched the last Tuesday [29 April] towards Marlborough' and further mentioning that his design was to 'march with the King'.²²

Having arrived at Marlborough on 30 April, there appears to be at least a one day gap which is unaccounted for. Goring still had 50 miles to travel before he could reach Faringdon and this distance could have been covered in a single day. If Goring had arrived in the Faringdon area on 1 May, then he would have needed to quarter for at least a day before the battle at Radcot on the evening of 2 May. The best explanation is that Goring tarried an extra day at Marlborough to either refresh his men or gain more intelligence. Cromwell and Fairfax at Newbury on 2 May heard from some royalist prisoners that Goring was going to attack Cromwell that evening, which means Goring had to have made his single days ride on 2 May and remained at Marlborough for the whole day on 1 May.²³

After refreshing his men Goring began his advance to Faringdon. The most direct route to take would have been northwards passing east of Swindon, then a small market town, but there is some confusion as to the final approach to Radcot Bridge. Did Goring slip past Cromwell at Faringdon and cross over the Thames at Radcot or did he cross further up the river

¹⁹ E. H., Earl of Clarendon, *History of the Rebellion and the Civil Wars in England; also his life written by himself, in which is included a continuation of his history of the Grand Rebellion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1843), 550

²⁰ Bodleian, Clarendon MS. 24 (136); Memegalos, *George Goring*, 244

²¹ Carlyle, *Oliver Cromwell's letter and speeches*, 228.

²² *Perfect Occurrences of Parliament, The XVIII week, From Friday the 25 April, till Friday the 2 May 1645*, (British Library, BL/TT/E260(27), 1645); The other reports were in: *The Scottish Dove, From Friday the 25 April till Friday the 2 May 1645*, (British Library, BL/TT/E281(10), 1645), 631, and; *Mecurius Civicus, No.101, From Thursday May 1 1645*, (British Library, BL/TT/E281(4), 1645), 910. All three of these news-books read almost identically and considering that they were all accounts from Parliament they were all probably derived from the same source. In this case the source is without a doubt Cromwell's letter to the House dated 28 April 1645. The *Scottish Dove* provides the same number of troops under Goring's command as the letter and similarly mentions the town of Devizes. *Civicus* and *Occurrences* at least have the correct date of Goring's departure and arrival at Marlborough; the *Scottish Dove* gives 'The Lords Day' (27 April) as the date, but Goring was still north of Bath at this point.

²³ Hartmann, *Faringdon in the Civil War*, 8

at Lechlade?²⁴ On balance he probably took the latter route. His initial orders on 27 April told him to reinforce the Faringdon garrison, but the revised orders a day later made a march to join Rupert and assist the king a priority. This could best be achieved by taking the road through Highworth and across the river at Lechlade aiming for a rendezvous at Burford, which he was subsequently to do, via the direct route. Goring's forces arrived at Lechlade and made their quarters in the town with a guard spread out northwards towards Bampton.²⁵

Whilst Goring was making his way towards Faringdon parliamentary forces were still encamped near the town. As noted above, Cromwell had already received intelligence from a captured servant that Goring was moving towards him. Fortunately the servant was only able to suggest that Goring was 'to hasten with all he had up to the King to Oxford' and that his force was composed of 3000 horse and 1000 foot.²⁶ Cromwell, now aware of the approaching royalist force, added in his letter to the Committee of Both Kingdoms that 'I shall have an eye towards him.'²⁷ The Committee of Both Kingdoms also informed Cromwell that Goring was moving towards Oxford, although it sent a separate letter to Fairfax asking him to confirm Goring's arrival at Marlborough on 29 April.²⁸ Whilst Goring was making his final march towards Lechlade Cromwell rode to Newbury to confer with Fairfax.

²⁴ What we know as the River Thames today was actually called the River Isis from a point north of Wallingford where it was joined by the River Thame.

²⁵ Hartmann, *Faringdon in the Civil War*, 8

²⁶ This was incorrect as Goring's foot were still at the siege of Taunton.

²⁷ Carlyle, *Oliver Cromwell's letter and Speeches*, 228

²⁸ CSPD, *Charles I 1644-45*, 445

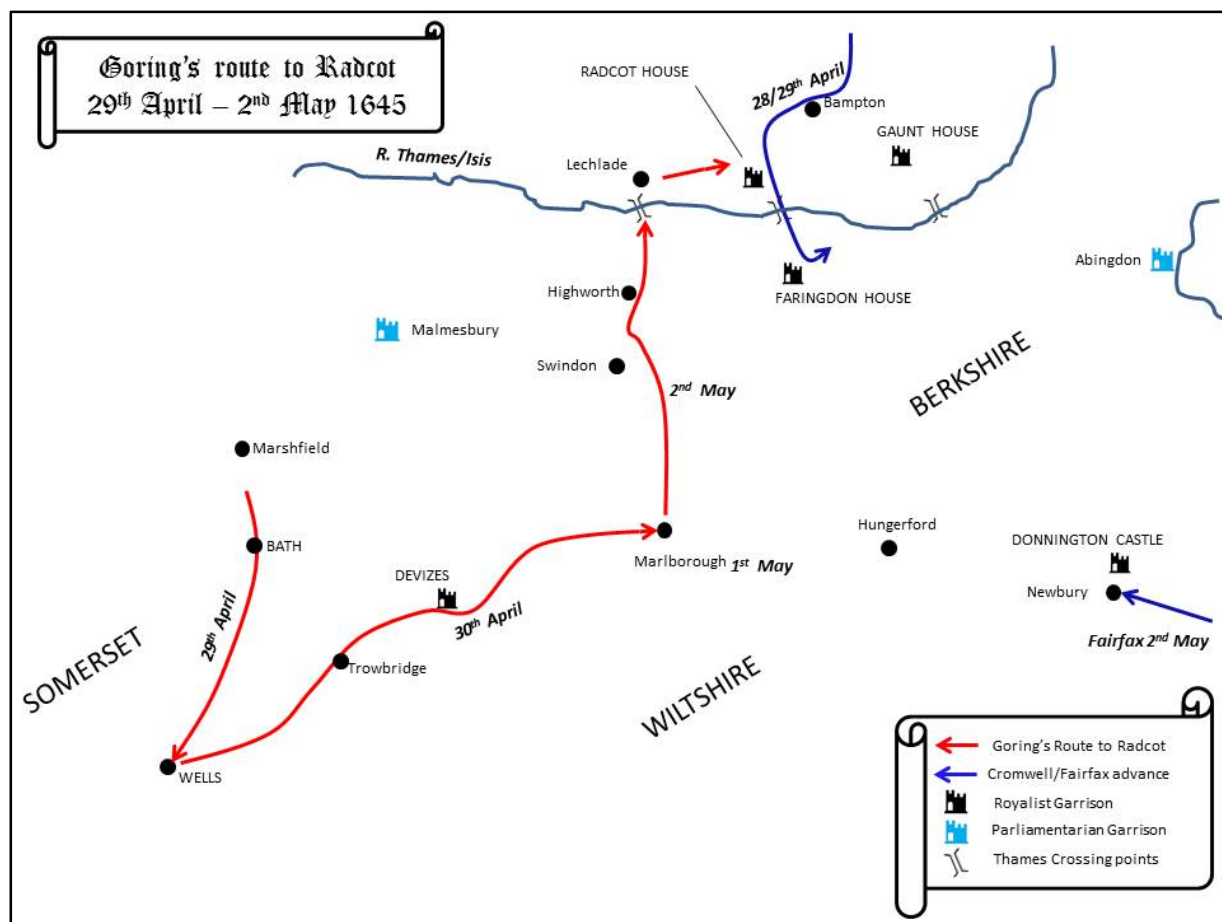


Figure 4: Goring's March to Radcot, (map by the author).

The Battle of Radcot Bridge

By the evening of 2 May, Goring had passed over the Thames at Lechlade and was quartered north of the river. Cromwell was away at this point, leaving his men near the town of Faringdon, possibly on Faringdon hill which would have given them a good view in the event of any attack. The two parliamentary Generals were conferring when they suddenly 'had notice of some Letters which were intercepted, relating Gen. Goring's intentions to fall upon [Cromwell's] Quarters, whereof he sent speedy intelligence to his Officers.'²⁹ The letters had been found on some royalist prisoners. As well as sending word to his men, Cromwell rode hastily back to Faringdon and prepared to meet Goring's advance.

The battle at Radcot was a disjointed affair. There are two main accounts of the battle which can be supplemented by smaller notes from some of the parliamentary news-books, as

²⁹ *The Kingdomes Weekly Intelligencer; From Tuesday the 29. April, to Tuesday the 6. Of May 1645*, (British Library, BL/TT/E282(2), 1645), 788; *The Weekly Account, The XVIII Week, 1645. From Wednesday the 30. April, to Wednesday the 7. May* (British Library, BL/TT/E282(3), 1645). Both manuscripts are likely derived from the same source.

well as some personal memoirs of royalist and parliamentary leaders. Most of the latter contain only one or two sentences and are shorn of any detail of the actual fighting itself. Of the primary accounts, the royalist view is given by the newsheet *Mecurius Aulicus*, which has a highly detailed account of the fighting.³⁰ The parliamentary account is given by Joshua Sprigg in his book *Anglia Rediviva*, which documents the New Model Army's early campaigns. Both of these accounts are, from the very nature of the authors, biased accounts where the success or loss of either side could be greatly exaggerated depending on how they wished to portray the battle to their readers. Although both accounts raise as many questions as they answer, some of the general details can be corroborated between them.

Having hastily hurried back from Newbury, Cromwell immediately ordered his men to secure Radcot Bridge. The troops available to Cromwell were part of the original force that had set out on his raid. He informed Parliament that 'I have that which was my regiment, and a part of Colonel Sydney's five troops "that" were re-created, and a part of Colonel Vermuyden's, and five troops of Colonel Fiennes's.'³¹ To these can be added a detachment of Colonel James Holbourne's regiment of dragoons and Colonel Pickering's regiment of foot, which had arrived on 29 April and had been used in the attempt to storm Faringdon House.³² The advance party of the parliamentary force was immediately sent to cross the Thames and secure Radcot Bridge. The nearest royalist regiment – the Earl of Brentford's regiment of horse under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Sir Arian Scroop – heard of the crossing and gathering together 100 men, moved swiftly to intercept the parliamentarians.³³ In a brief engagement somewhere between the river and Bampton the royalists repulsed Cromwell's men and pushed them back towards Radcot Bridge having killed nine troopers and taken 30 prisoners.³⁴

³⁰ *Mecurius Aulicus*, 'Communicating the Intelligence', 1580-81. Whilst caution should be used with both royalist and parliamentary news-book given their 'propagandist' nature, there are a few other issues with the *Aulicus* account, other than the date ascribed to the action. The *Aulicus*' account of the battle was written on 8 May, a full five days after the battle had finished. Furthermore, it begins the account 'for early this morning an Expreste came to His Majesie'; Goring had returned to Radcot on 7 or 8 of May, having attended the king two days earlier where he would have related the report to the king in person. The despatch in question probably reached the king on 4 May at Woodstock where Goring had arranged to meet the king. Either *Aulicus* is confusing dates here and entered the account in the wrong part, or the news did not reach the editorial office in Oxford until 8 May.

³¹ Carlyle, *Oliver Cromwell's letter and Speeches*, 228

³² Hartmann, *Faringdon in the Civil War*, 7

³³ Patrick Ruthven, Earl of Forth and Brentford. Brentford was his title in the English peerage (1644). Forth had been the Lord General of the Oxford Army until his retirement, after the second Battle of Newbury.

³⁴ *Mecurius Aulicus*, 'Communicating the Intelligence', 1580-81

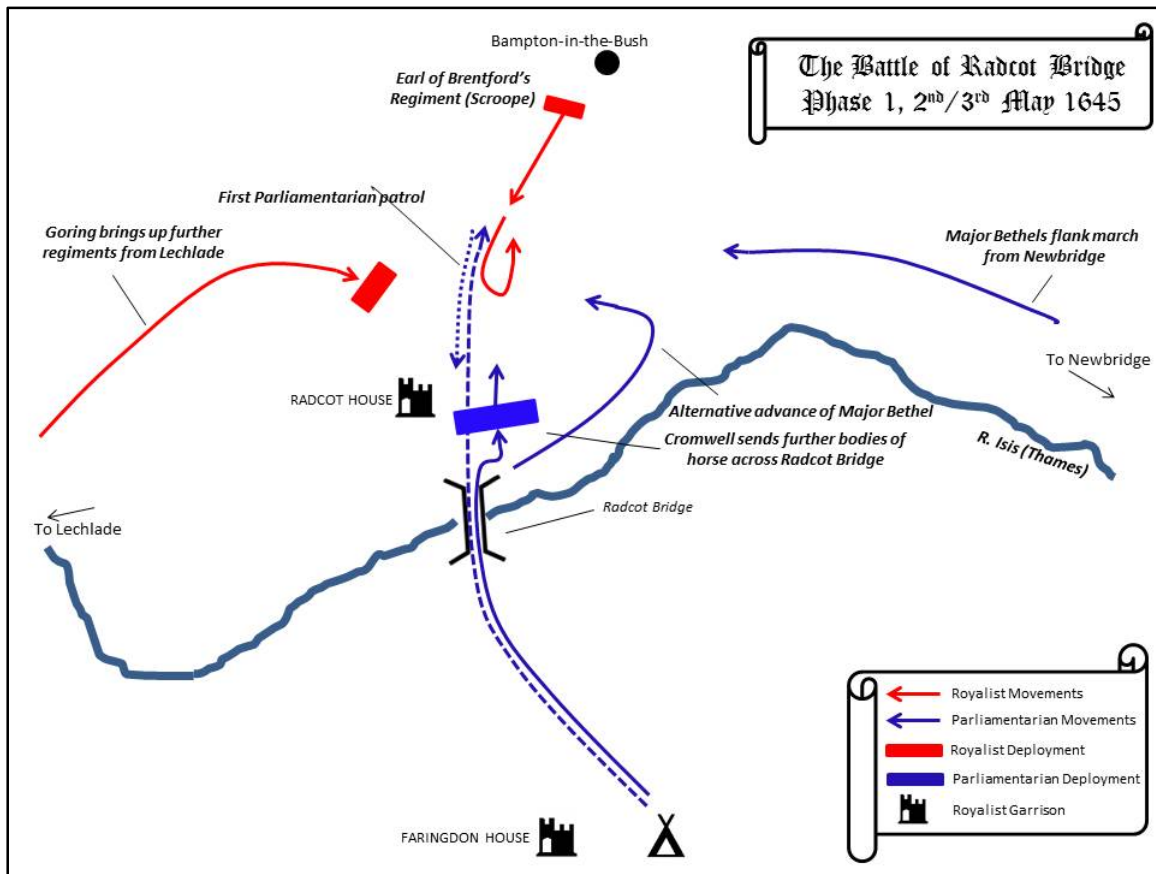


Figure 5: The Battle of Radcot Bridge (Phase 1), (map by the author).

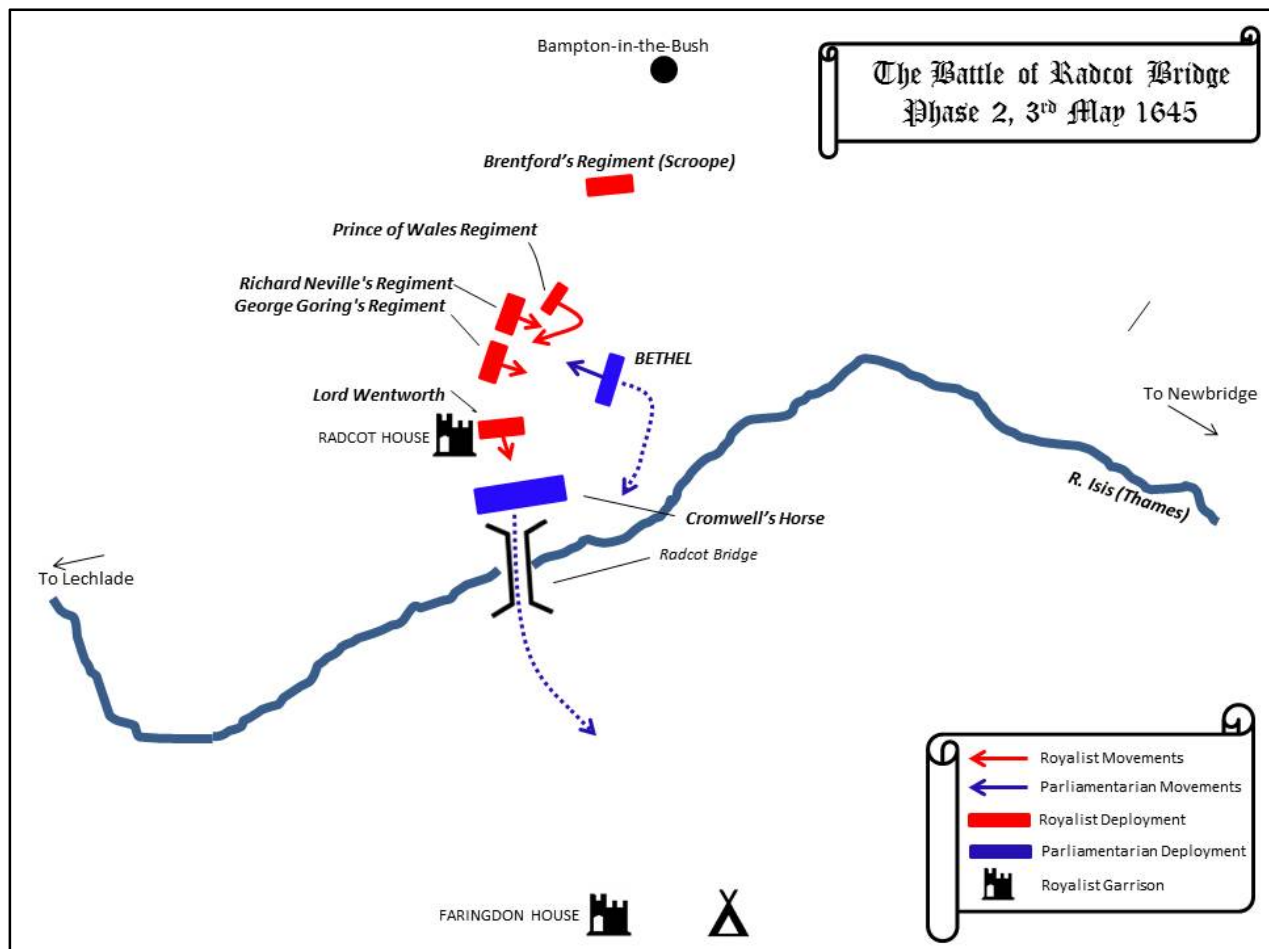
Cromwell then reinforced his men at the bridge by sending 'neare 100 horse more' and, according to the royalist account, 'drew three great bodies up to a narrow passage and sent their Major [Christopher] Bethel another way to fall upon his Lordships flankes' with 300 horse.³⁵ There is some confusion as to what this 'other way' precisely was. In the seventeenth century there were only three crossings of the Thames immediately to the west of Abingdon; at Lechlade, Radcot Bridge and Newbridge. Since Cromwell's men were already attempting to cross at Radcot and Lechlade was held by Goring, the only other alternative must be Newbridge. Newbridge was mentioned in the *Aulicus* account and Sprigg also wrote that 'the lieutenant-general was making a passage over New-bridge.'³⁶ Although the distance would take Bethell some time to reach Radcot, it would be possible if Cromwell despatched him at the same time as the first party of horse. Alternatively, the Major could have crossed Radcot Bridge and swung to the east in the hope of outflanking Scroop. In the meantime Scroop, assisted by Major General John Digby, retired before the parliamentary forces trying to cross Radcot Bridge. The account of this action also appears in Rushworth's account where he wrote that Cromwell 'sends a Party of Horse over the River to observe their Motions: at Radcot- These

³⁵ *Mecurius Aulicus*, 'Communicating the Intelligence', 1581

³⁶ Sprigg, *Anglia Rediviva*, 18

were repuls'd by Col. Scroop, who nevertheless by Cromwel's Reinforcements was compel'd to retire.³⁷

At this point the battle divided into two different engagements. Bethel's flanking ride was detected by the royalists, for as he arrived 'a small party of the Prince of Wales regiment was ready to expect Bethell.' The Prince's regiment charged, but became stuck in a bog, suggesting proximity to the river, where they wheeled about and retired before Bethel in disorder. Goring had however, brought up two further regiments – his own under Lieutenant Colonel Standish and Colonel Richard Neville's – which promptly counter-attacked and assisted by the Prince of Wales regiment, 'broke them all to pieces.' Bethel's forces scattered, with 18 men killed and the Major and four others taken prisoner. The rest of his men 'saved themselves in the darke' and were presumably able to re-join the main force about Faringdon.³⁸ In Sprigg's account it was recorded that, 'major Bethel engaging too far, in the dark, was taken prisoner, and about four men more lost, and two colours, several wounded.'³⁹



³⁷ Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, 522

³⁸ *Mecurius Aulicus*, 'Communicating the Intelligence, 1581. 18 men killed in: Hartmann, *Faringdon in the Civil War*, 8

³⁹ Sprigg, *Anglia Rediviva*, 18

Figure 6: The Battle of Radcot Bridge (Phase 2), (map by the author).

Whilst Bethel was being repulsed, a smaller fight was developing nearer the bridge. Details are lacking however and all *Aulicus* could report was that the 'Lord Wentworth in the interim with a very small number stopt the Rebels other bodies from coming over the passe.'⁴⁰ This may explain how Goring's small force of horse with 400 men was able to defeat the opposing cavalry. The stopping of any re-enforcements reaching Bethel would have meant that both sides probably fielded the same number of horse. The darkness would have also been a major factor, leading to confusion on the battlefield, whilst keeping the casualties suffered during the retreat to a minimum. Goring's men, having stopped the forces trying to cross the bridge and having also dealt with Bethel's detachment, finally secured the crossing as the parliamentarians retreated back towards Faringdon. The battle of Radcot Bridge was over. The force sent by Cromwell had lost nearly 60 men, both killed and taken prisoner. The royalists according to *Aulicus* 'received no losse, but Captaine Medcaffe sleightly hurt, Lieutenant Hall and some few common souldiers hurt and not one killed or taken that we can yet here of.'⁴¹ Cromwell had now been checked and Goring was free to continue his journey to join the king.

The Effect of Radcot Bridge

News of the victory over Cromwell carried swiftly. King Charles received the news of the victory whilst at Woodstock on the same day. Clarendon was able to write about the battle many years later, stating that Goring 'fell upon a horse quarter of Cromwell's... as they were attempting a passage over the river of Isis [Thames], so prosperously, that he broke and defeated them with a great slaughter.'⁴² *Aulicus* was triumphant, beginning the next entry 'Thus Master Cromwells 1000 horse were shamefully beaten by 400 of his Majesties.'⁴³ The general euphoria was to have a detrimental effect subsequently.

Princes Rupert and Maurice arrived at Burford on 4 May and were joined by Goring who attended the king the next day at Woodstock. At this point the Committee of both Kingdoms decided that the combining of the princes with Goring and the king was a threat that could not be ignored. Whilst the New Model Army had continued its march to the relief of Taunton following the battle of Radcot Bridge, the concentration of the king's forces caused the Committee of Both Kingdoms to order Fairfax to halt at Salisbury on 5 May and to return to the Oxford area whilst detaching a part of his army for the relief of Taunton.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ *Mecurius Aulicus*, 'Communicating the Intelligence', 1581.

⁴¹ *ibid.*

⁴² Clarendon, *History of the Rebellion*, 550

⁴³ *Mecurius Aulicus*, 'Communicating the Intelligence', 1582

⁴⁴ CSPD, *Charles I 1644-45*, 456-57



Figure 7: Radcot Bridge. Cromwell's cavalry came over the bridge but were forced to withdraw as the royalists secured the crossing (photograph by the author).

Undaunted, Fairfax continued his march and arrived at Blandford on 7 May. On the same day there was a small skirmish at Burford between some of Goring's men and some parliamentary cavalry as recorded by Richard Symonds in his diary. 'This morning Generall Goring tooke forty of Cromwell's horse prisoners, and two Colonels, neare Burford, which newes saluted us in Woodstock Parke.'⁴⁵ Meanwhile at Taunton the situation had become critical. The royalists launched a determined assault on the town on the evening on 7 May and broke through the parliamentary defences. The garrison commander, Colonel Blake, nevertheless continued to resist until the town was relieved by Colonel Weldron with a part of the New Model Army on 14 May.⁴⁶

Radcot Bridge had been a minor skirmish but its effect had far reaching and fatal consequences for the royalist cause. For a minor cavalry action the victory was magnified and given greater significance than was actually merited. Although Cromwell's raid had been finally checked, for the parliamentarians it was little more than a temporary setback which did little to change their overall strategy. Nor did it have much effect on Cromwell himself or his operations. His raid and run of success had in reality been checked much earlier by his failed attempt against Faringdon and it was the concentration of royalist forces that determined the New Model Army operations subsequently. Radcot Bridge made the concentration of the royalist Oxford Army possible. More fatally for the royalist cause, Goring was now in high favour with King Charles, intensifying a clash of personalities. Clarendon wrote of Goring that

⁴⁵ R. Symonds, *Diary of the Marches of the Royal Army*, (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press Reprint, 1997 ed.), 65; E. Walker, *Historical Discourses upon Several Occasions*, Ed. By H. Clapton (London: Samuel Keble, 1705), 125

⁴⁶ Memegalos, *George Goring*, 250-53; Gardiner, *History of the Great Civil War*, 207-09; Kitson, *Old Ironsides*, 110-11.

the battle 'gave him great reputation, and made him exceedingly welcome' at the royalist council of War at Stow-on-the-Wold on 8 May.⁴⁷



Figure 8: The fields near Radcot House. Most of the fighting probably happened in this vicinity (photograph by the author).

At the council Goring pressed to return to the West and with a greater authority than before. He was backed by Lord Digby who had a great influence over the king. Surprisingly he found an ally in Prince Rupert, but this alliance was temporary and fraught with enmity and jealousy as Rupert and Digby disliked each other intensely. Sir Edward Walker, the king's Secretary of War, who was at the council noted that Rupert was jealous of having a rival in command, and so feared Goring,' who had 'by his late actions gotten much Reputation.' It suited both Rupert and Goring to have independent commands as 'he [Rupert] had no less desire that Goring should return again into the West than Goring did not to remain where he commanded.'⁴⁸ It was decided that Goring should march westward with 3000 Cavalry whilst the king and Rupert moved north towards Chester with the hope of reconquering the North. The decision was fatal. Once Goring had attained his independent command he was loath to part with it. When summoned to join the king on 19 May, he dithered and made excuses, with the backing of the Prince of Wales' Council, supporting the young prince in his command of the West. Goring wrote to the king early in June to say that he would come with his horse once his renewed siege of Taunton had been completed. The letter was delivered into the hands of the New Model Army. With this information, Fairfax made the decision to engage the king. On 14 June both sides joined battle at Naseby. The king was overwhelmingly defeated and although

⁴⁷ Clarendon, *History of the Rebellion*, 550.

⁴⁸ Walker, *Historical Discourses*, 126; Memegalos, *George Goring*, 250-51

the war was to continue for another year the royalist cause was effectively lost. On 10 July Goring was brought to battle at Langport and was beaten, ironically by a charge led by the same Major Bethel who had been captured at Radcot Bridge. The king's cause never recovered from these defeats. The parliamentarians methodically reduced the remaining royalist garrisons in the country and the king's capital at Oxford surrendered in June 1646. His cause lost, the king surrendered himself to the Scottish Army at Newark in May 1646.⁴⁹

Conclusion

The battle of Radcot Bridge had been a minor skirmish which had no military effect on operations for either the king or parliament. The political effects and the decisions that came after the battle resulted in part from the exaggerated significance attached to the battle by the royalists. Goring, high in favour was able to press for a strategy that, in the short term at least, was favourable both to himself and Prince Rupert. This self-serving strategy, however, was to have fatal consequences for the royalists. Writing of the events of the day before, Sir Edward Walker noted that, 'the resolutions of the next Day were such as laid the Foundation of our ruin.'⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Gardiner, *History of the Great Civil War*, 251 and 271-73; Wanklyn and Jones, *A Military History of the English Civil War*, 253-61

⁵⁰ Walker, *Historical Discourses*, 126

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MAIDSTONE 1648

By: Simon Marsh

Abstract

Divisions within Parliament and the New Model Army following the end of the first Civil War (1642-1646) and a failed counter revolutionary coup in the City of London in 1647 encouraged King Charles I to plot with Scottish lords to restore his power. Highhandedness by the parliamentary committee in Kent separately led to a popular uprising that was exploited by the king's supporters in May 1648. Faced with a parallel revolt in South Wales, unrest in Essex and Surrey, and Scottish plans to invade England in support of the king; Parliament resolved to deal with the rebels in Kent, despatching Sir Thomas Fairfax with elements of the New Model Army. After small scale actions at Blackheath and Norfleet, Fairfax probably observed the breakup of the rebels following a rendezvous on Barham Heath and resolved to take Maidstone. Crossing the Medway above the town, Fairfax attacked early on the evening of 1 June. This article looks at the events of the 1648 Maidstone campaign, examining why a small New Model Army force was successful in ending a large scale revolt in Kent. It examines the nature of the hard fighting in Maidstone, Fairfax's superior generalship and identifies failings on the part of rebel commanders.

Introduction and Historical Background

In May 1646, with his last field army defeated at Stow-on-the-Wold two months earlier, King Charles I surrendered at Newark to the Scottish army which was fighting with Parliament. The Scots had been in alliance against the king from late 1643 under the terms of the 'Solemn League and Covenant'. However, this agreement had weakened and the Scots were prepared to come to terms with the king, in return for the introduction of the Presbyterian religion into England and the exclusion of royalists from public office. But the king was not prepared to accept these terms. At the same time, the Scots were negotiating a financial settlement with their allies for their past participation in the war. After part receipt of a £400,000 payment, the Scots washed their hands of the king and handed him over to Parliament in February 1647, which subsequently moved the king to Holdenby House in Northamptonshire.⁵¹

During 1647, the majority 'Presbyterian' faction within Parliament wanted to come to moderate terms with the king and disband the army. The army, more radical, were concerned about an accommodation with Charles, which could deny it arrears of pay and undo much of what it had fought for. In June 1647, the king was seized from Holdenby by a faction in the army and moved to Hampton Court. New peace terms, still relatively moderate, were put to the king by the Army Council under the title of the 'Heads of the Proposals'. Charles dismissed these, possibly hoping that he could make political capital out of the dissension between the parliamentary Presbyterians, the City of London and its militia on one side and the army, with

⁵¹ *Journal of the House of Commons*, Vol. V (London: HMSO, 1802), 13, 25; C.V. Wedgwood, *The Kings War 1641-1647* (London: Collins, 1958), 611; I. Gentles, *The New Model Army* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 145.

its high proportion of religious independents, on the other. Poor advice from his aide Ashburnham and a belief that the army was beholden to him also led Charles toward this decision.⁵²

In late July 1647 a London mob attacked Parliament, ostensibly over control of the City's militia committee, but with frustration over the failure to restore the king's rights and privileges as an underlying factor. This was exploited, if not instigated, by the City authorities, along with some Presbyterian members of Parliament and developed quickly into the City militia being used to defend what had become a counter-revolution against the army and its friends in Parliament.⁵³ In response, Sir Thomas Fairfax moved the New Model Army into London in early August to remove the challenge to Parliament's and the army's authority.

Whilst severe disagreements over what former parliamentarian allies judged as an acceptable constitutional settlement were all too apparent in the events of July and August 1647, views within the army also varied widely. In late October and early November 1647, the army commanders and representatives of the soldiery debated the settlement issue at Putney. However, the demands of the 'levelling' faction within the army were unacceptable to the Army Council and its 'ring-leaders' were arrested at a muster of the army at Ware in November 1647. Against this background of dispute amongst his old enemies, Charles had been in secret negotiation with the Scots. This resulted in an 'engagement' in late December 1647 between Charles and the Scottish Lords Hamilton, Lanark, Lauderdale and Loudon to introduce the Presbyterian Church in England and for one of Charles' sons to be resident in Scotland, in return for Scottish help in regaining his power.

Against this background, the 1648 rising in Kent had a more parochial catalyst. On 25 December 1647 the mayor of Canterbury, acting on an earlier ordinance published by the county committee proscribing the celebration of Christmas, attempted to force shopkeepers to open-up for business. The citizens of Canterbury reacted angrily and the situation deteriorated into a riot. The city magazine was seized and 1,000 men opposing the committee were armed.⁵⁴ Order was restored by the county committee and a regiment of the New Model Army was sent into Kent in January 1648.⁵⁵ Those opposed to the county committee were arrested and imprisoned in Leeds Castle for several months until bailed. The case of those arrested and indicted for being involved in the riot in Canterbury was tried in the town on 10 May 1648 and despite attempts by one of the judges to direct the jury to convict, the accused were acquitted.⁵⁶

The judges then decided to detain the accused until Parliament had responded to events, much to the local disquiet. In this charged atmosphere, the cavaliers amongst the Kent gentry framed and subscribed a petition to Parliament with the Grand Jury. The petition called for a treaty to settle the king's and Parliament's just rights, the disbandment of the army, government by known and established laws and no imposition of taxes on property. The final clause ensured the petition was widely popular, with almost the entire adult male population of

⁵² R. Ashton, *Counter Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 24-25.

⁵³ Aston, *Counter Revolution*, 350-351; Gentles, *The New Model Army*, 185-191.

⁵⁴ A. Everitt, *The Community of Kent and the Great Rebellion 1640-1660* (Woking: Leicester University Press, 1973), 233.

⁵⁵ *News From Kent* (British Library: BL/TT/E448(5), 1648), 1.

⁵⁶ Everitt, *The Community of Kent and the Great Rebellion*, 236.

the county eventually signing.⁵⁷ All who wished to present the petition to Parliament were to meet at Blackheath on 31 May 1648.⁵⁸ The parliamentary committee in Kent declared the petition seditious and sent out troops to repress it, but this increased support for the petition and most of the county forces, which were to have been used to suppress the petitioners, mutinied.⁵⁹

Preliminaries

Around 22 May 1648, the magazines at Rochester, Sittingborne, Faversham, Sandwich, Canterbury, Gravesend, Chatham Ashford and Scots Hall were seized by the Kentish forces.⁶⁰ The castles at Deal, Walmer, Sandown and Sandgate followed, however, attempts to take Dover Castle, defended by two companies of the New Model Army, failed.⁶¹ Part of the navy in the Downs also mutinied in favour of the rising; the latter, in part, over the appointment of Colonel Rainsborough as Vice Admiral. Rainsborough was seen by the sailors as a sectarian 'landlubber' who had been appointed to undertake the unwelcome re-modelling of the navy.⁶²

Whilst the Kentish petitioners had so far been successful, inherent tensions within their ranks began to appear. No individual had emerged to control the revolt and instead rival leaders were located in different parts of the county. To overcome these differences two committees sitting at Rochester and Canterbury were created to command the uprising. Whilst this helped with geographic differences, it brought to the fore the schisms between the moderates in the county who supported the petition on the one hand and the Kentish cavaliers and their compatriots who had arrived from outside the county on the other. The moderates in particular had no real wish to be drawn into a cavalier army and wanted nothing to do with wider unrest which had recently broken out in East Anglia, South Wales or the South West.⁶³

In London, Parliament was not only concerned about rebellion in the provinces, but remained nervous about how the City would react. Memories of the counter-revolutionary coup of July/August 1647 were still fresh. City apprentices had also rioted, overcoming the militia as recently as early April 1648 and were only dispersed from advancing on Parliament after the intervention of Colonel Rich and Colonel Barkstead's regiments of New Model horse and foot respectively. An attempt by an armed Surrey mob to present a petition to Parliament calling for a settlement with the king on 16 May had also resulted in the intervention of Rich and Barkstead's regiments, which were by then deployed in Whitehall and the Mews.⁶⁴

Despite these developments, not all was going against Parliament. Sir John Tufton,

⁵⁷ Ibid., 239, 242.

⁵⁸ R. L'Estrange. *L'Estrange His Vindication to Kent and the Justification of Kent to the World* (BL., C. 136, f 31, 1649), 2.

⁵⁹ Everitt, *The Community of Kent and the Great Rebellion*, 240.

⁶⁰ C.H. Firth (ed.), *The Clarke Papers*, Vol. II (London: Royal Historical Society, 1992), 14; M. Carter, *True Relation of that Honourable, Through Unfortunate, Expedition of Kent, Essex and Colchester in 1648* (Colchester: I. Marsden, n.d.), 14.

⁶¹ BL/TT/E448(5), *News from Kent*, 1.

⁶² Ashton, *Counter Revolution*, 411-413.

⁶³ Everitt, *The Community of Kent and the Great Rebellion*, 252-253.

⁶⁴ I. Gentles, 'The struggle for London in the Second Civil War', in *Historical Journal*, Vol. 26(2) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Gentles, *The New Model Army*, 246.

second Earl of Thanet, who had been a key leader of the rising around Ashford, Hatfield and Charing, promising money and recruiting over one thousand men, had second thoughts in late May. Through his cousin, the Earl of Pembroke, he approached the Derby House Committee, which directed military operations on Parliament's behalf, pleading forgiveness and reporting on the plans of those leading the revolt. The Committee and Parliament accepted the overture of 'that Ambidextrous Lord', as Roger L'Estrange described him and sent him back into Kent on 24 May, offering indemnity to those rebels who would lay down their arms and the opportunity to present their petition to Parliament. However, the rebels were not prepared to do this because of fears of an attack upon them by a revengeful county committee.⁶⁵

With the failure of the Earl of Thanet's mission, Parliament concluded that the threat from Kent had become greater than the danger posed by the City and on 26 May it ordered Lord Fairfax, Lord General of the New Model Army, to 'give order to as many forces as can be timely had for the defence of the Parliament'.⁶⁶ Much of the New Model Army had been sent away from London with Lieutenant General Oliver Cromwell to quell unrest in south Wales. Fairfax therefore planned a rendezvous of the troops available to him at Hounslow Heath on 27 May, which appears to have taken place. A regiment of horse under Colonel Rich and six companies of foot belonging to Colonel Barkstead's regiment were ordered into Southwark to protect the City and the borough from any Kentish advance, whilst Fairfax prepared the remainder of the army to march. Very early in the morning of 27 May, Rich's troopers appear to have come into contact with an advance guard of Kentish horse, part of a force which had entered Deptford and taken a parliamentarian vessel before advancing to New Cross. Rich's horse were chased off by the Kentish troopers, but the latter were fired upon by their own infantry as they returned to New Cross.⁶⁷

By 30 May 1648, Fairfax had gathered four regiments of horse, his own and those commanded by Colonels Rich, Whalley, and Ireton, as well as three of foot under Colonels Hewson and Barkstead and the Tower Guards under Colonel Needham.⁶⁸ Six companies of Colonel Ingoldsby's regiment which were not with Cromwell in South Wales were also part of Fairfax's force.⁶⁹ These troops advanced during the morning through New Cross and were met by a messenger from the Kentish forces who asked permission to present the Kent petition to Parliament. Fairfax refused and pressed on, encountering the Kentish forces on Blackheath. Rich's horse attacked with Barkstead's foot. This skirmish left one of Rich's troopers dead, but thirty Kentish troopers captured. Later in the day a further encounter occurred toward Dartford which resulted in three Kentish casualties and further prisoners. Fairfax's army camped at Eltham that evening.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Carter, *True Relation*, 30-32; Ashton, *Counter Revolution*, 146-147; B. Whitelocke, *Memorials of the English affair* (London: J. Tonson, 1732), 307.

⁶⁶ Gentles, *The New Model Army*, 246-247.

⁶⁷ *The Last News from Kent* (British Library: BL/TT/E445(9),1648). According to contemporary parliamentarian tracts, a mixed force of Kentish horse and foot numbering 800-1200 men had reached Deptford.

⁶⁸ C.H. Firth and G. Davies, *Regimental History of Cromwell's Army*, Vol. I and II (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940), 66, 120, 146, 217, 573; Firth (ed.), *The Clarke Papers*, 18; Gentles, *New Model Army*, 247 (footnote).

⁶⁹ Whitelocke, *Memorials of the English Affair*, 308.

⁷⁰ *The Fight in Kent between the Army and the Kentish Men* (British Library: BL/TT/E445(22),1648), 3; H. Cary, *Memorials of the Great Civil War in England from 1646 to 1652* (London: Henry Colburn, 1852), 437-438.

When news of Fairfax's advance reached the leaders of the Kentish revolt, the proposed rendezvous at Blackheath was cancelled. Instead Kentish forces, now numbering around 10,000 and armed with weapons and ammunition obtained from the captured county magazines, concentrated around Rochester.⁷¹

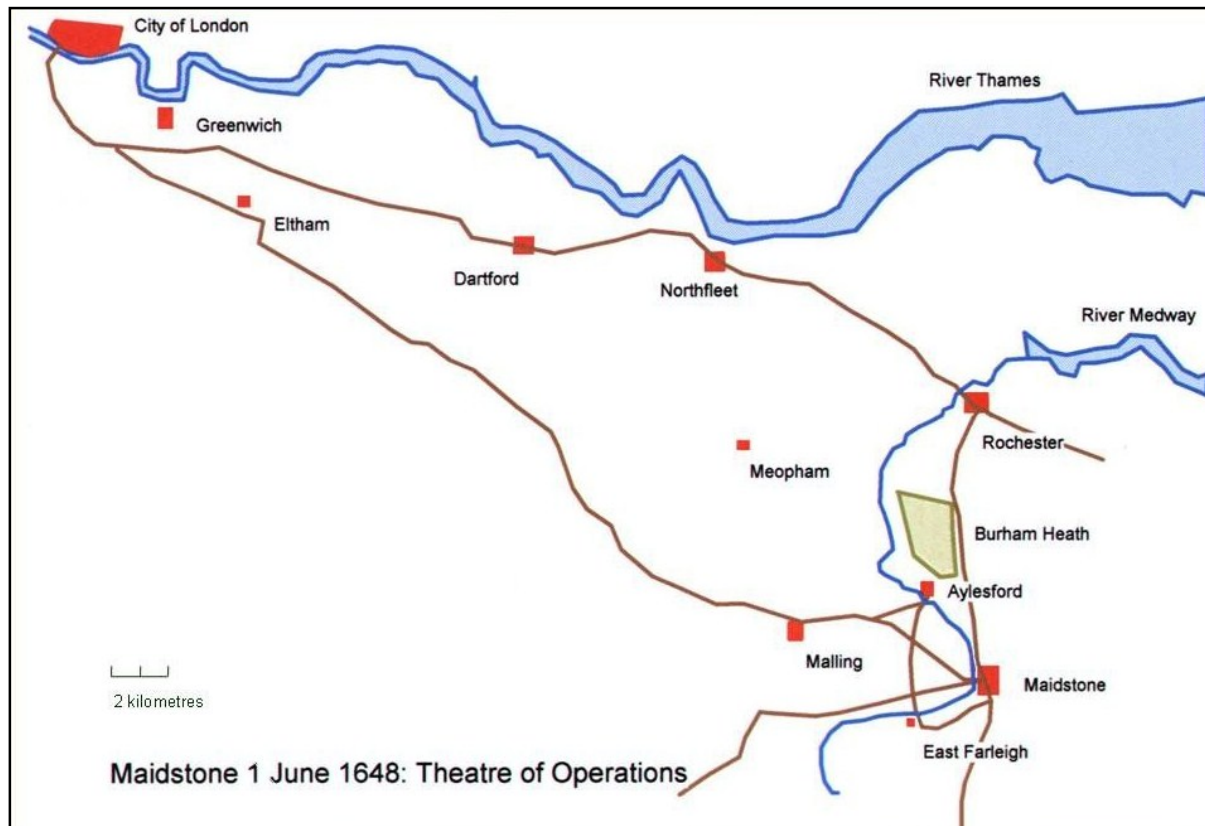


Figure 1: Maidstone Theatre of Operations (map created by the author).

On 31 May Fairfax's army rendezvoused on Cranford Heath and then marched through Dartford, halting beyond the town. Fairfax had received intelligence that the Kentish forces were holding a bridge on the road to Gravesend just short of Norfleet and ordered around 200 horse with 100 foot mounted behind to advance and attack this position. These troops, under the command of Major Husbands of Colonel Rich's regiment of horse, found 80 Kentish foot under a Major Childe defending the bridge which they had barricaded with carts and other obstructions.⁷² They had also placed harrows in the river, which was apparently fordable on horse in the vicinity of the bridge, in order to impede any attempts by cavalry to cross. Husbands' foot beat the Kentish forces from the bridge and his horse swam the river and pursued their fleeing enemy into Norfleet. Twenty of the Kentish forces were killed and 50

⁷¹ *The Fight in Kent* (British Library: BL/TT/E445(22),1648), 3; Carter, *True Relation*, 34.

⁷² *The Last News from Kent* (British Library: BL/TT/E445(27),1648), 1.

taken prisoner.⁷³ Husbands continued through Gravesend, but was then ordered to re-join the rest of Fairfax's army at Malling on 1 June.

Whilst Husbands was in action around Norfleet, Fairfax had continued his advance. Following a council of war on 31 May, he appears to have resolved to take Maidstone and its important bridge across the Medway rather than attempt a head-on assault on Rochester, around which most of the Kentish forces were positioned. By taking the bridge at Maidstone, Fairfax would be able to operate on either side of the Medway, increasing his scope for manoeuvre against the rebel forces. It also raised the possibility of defeating piecemeal any Kentish forces in or around Maidstone, thus reducing the overall numbers available to the rebel command. In addition it placed him between the Kentish forces and any potential support they might receive from Surrey, which had also shown indications of rising.

After stopping overnight at Meopham, on 1 June Fairfax marched his army to Malling where he appears to have halted to rendezvous with the detachment that had taken the bridge at Norfleet and, apparently, two troops of dragoons under captains Freman and Barrington that had been despatched from Wiltshire.⁷⁴ Fairfax reportedly now had 7,000 men, which appears to correspond with the numbers suggested by the available pay warrants for May and June 1648. These indicate that the regiments and independent companies/troops serving under Fairfax were at or near full strength and on this basis would have numbered, without officers, around 6,800 men. At Malling Fairfax published a proclamation against his troops plundering. This was not entirely successful as, on 3 June, one of Colonel Barkstead's soldiers was condemned to death for stealing three shillings from a country woman.⁷⁵

During the clear morning of 1 June the rebels held a rendezvous on Barham Heath between Maidstone and Rochester where George Goring, First Earl of Norwich was proclaimed general of the Kentish army. Although, the decision to appoint him appears to have been made earlier, probably taking place the day before.⁷⁶ The Earl of Clarendon described Goring as 'a man fitter to have drawn such a body together by his frolic and pleasant humour [...] than to form and conduct them towards any enterprise', adding that he had no experience of war and did not know how to be a general. During the rendezvous, the Kentish forces observed Fairfax's troops as they advanced from Meopham toward Malling.⁷⁷ The Kentish army broke-up around 1 pm. Some units returned to quarters, which were widely dispersed, whilst others were ordered to secure or break down the bridges across the Medway and to watch Fairfax's force which Roger L'Estrange, who was with the Kent forces, describes at that time as 'hovering indifferently betwixt Rochester and Maidstone.'⁷⁸ This suggests Fairfax was by then at Malling. From Malling, Fairfax continued his advanced to East Farleigh, a crossing on the Medway two

⁷³ *The Lord General's Letter in Answer to the Message of the Kentish-men, May 31, 1648* (British Library: BL/TT/E445(26), 1648), 6; *The Last News from Kent* (British Library: BL/TT/E445(27), 1648), 1; J. Rushworth, *Historical Collections Part IV, Vol. II* (London: D. Browne, 1721), 1137.

⁷⁴ *The Last News from Kent* (British Library: BL/TT/E445(26), 1648), 7.

⁷⁵ Whitelocke, *Memorials of the English Affair*, 308; *The Last News from Kent* (British Library: BL/TT/E445(9), 1648).

⁷⁶ Carter, *True Relation*, 35; L'Estrange. *His Vindication to Kent* (BL., C. 136, f 31, 1649), C2.

⁷⁷ Edward Earl of Clarendon, *History of the Great Rebellion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1849), 391; L'Estrange. *His Vindication to Kent* (BL., C. 136, f 31, 1649), C2.

⁷⁸ Carter, *True Relation*, 35, 37; L'Estrange. *His Vindication to Kent* (BL., C. 136, f 31, 1649), D.

miles below Maidstone, arriving there probably around six in the evening.⁷⁹

The Battle

At East Farleigh the Medway was spanned by a four arched stone bridge. This was lightly guarded by Kentish troops and no attempt seems to have been made to break it down by the defenders. After a short skirmish, the bridge fell to Fairfax's soldiers.⁸⁰ Once over the bridge Fairfax turned north-east toward Maidstone. Between East Farleigh and Maidstone the road crossed the river Loose at a bridge at Tovil. The road continued north east before turning north to enter Maidstone. The fields around Tovil and to the south of Maidstone were enclosed and the lanes approaching the town had been barricaded with trees by its defenders.

John Leland, when he visited Maidstone in 1538, described the town as 'a market town, of one long streete well builded, and full of innes.'⁸¹ The 'long streete' referred to by Leland was almost certainly the line of the modern Week Street, Gabriels Hill and Stone Street, which in 1669 contained a combined total of around 180 houses.⁸² This three quarter mile line of streets ran from north to south, descending Gabriels Hill from Week Street to reach Stone Street. At the bottom of Gabriels Hill a bridge crossed the river Len, a tributary of the Medway. A quarter of a mile west of this bridge was All Saints' Church, the Parish church of the town, which had been built on the site of an earlier church at the end of the 14th century. A separate church, St Faith's, was located a little to the west of Week Street and would play an important part in the final stages of the battle. Located at the top of Gabriels Hill was the market cross and running westward from here was the high street which crossed the bridge over the river Medway. Celia Fiennes during her visit to the town in 1697 noted that the buildings of the town were mostly made of timber, the high street was quite broad and, by then, part of the town had encroached across the Medway.⁸³

⁷⁹ Carter, *True Relation*, 37.

⁸⁰ J.M Russell, *History of Maidstone* (Rochester: John Hallewell, 1978), 265; S.R. Gardiner, *History of the Great Civil War, Vol. IV* (London: Phoenix Press, 1987), 141; The soldiers killed in the vicinity of East Farleigh bridge were said to have been buried in a field close to the lane leading from Barming to Farleigh, apparently on the south side of the Medway. A grave-pit was discovered there around 1800, in which men and horse bones, a gold ring, pieces of damaged leather, armour and spurs were reportedly found.

⁸¹ Russell, *History of Maidstone*, 217.

⁸² Russell, *History of Maidstone*, 234.

⁸³ C. Morris (ed.), *The Illustrated Journeys of Celia Feinnes 1685-c. 1712* (London: MacDonald, 1984), 124.

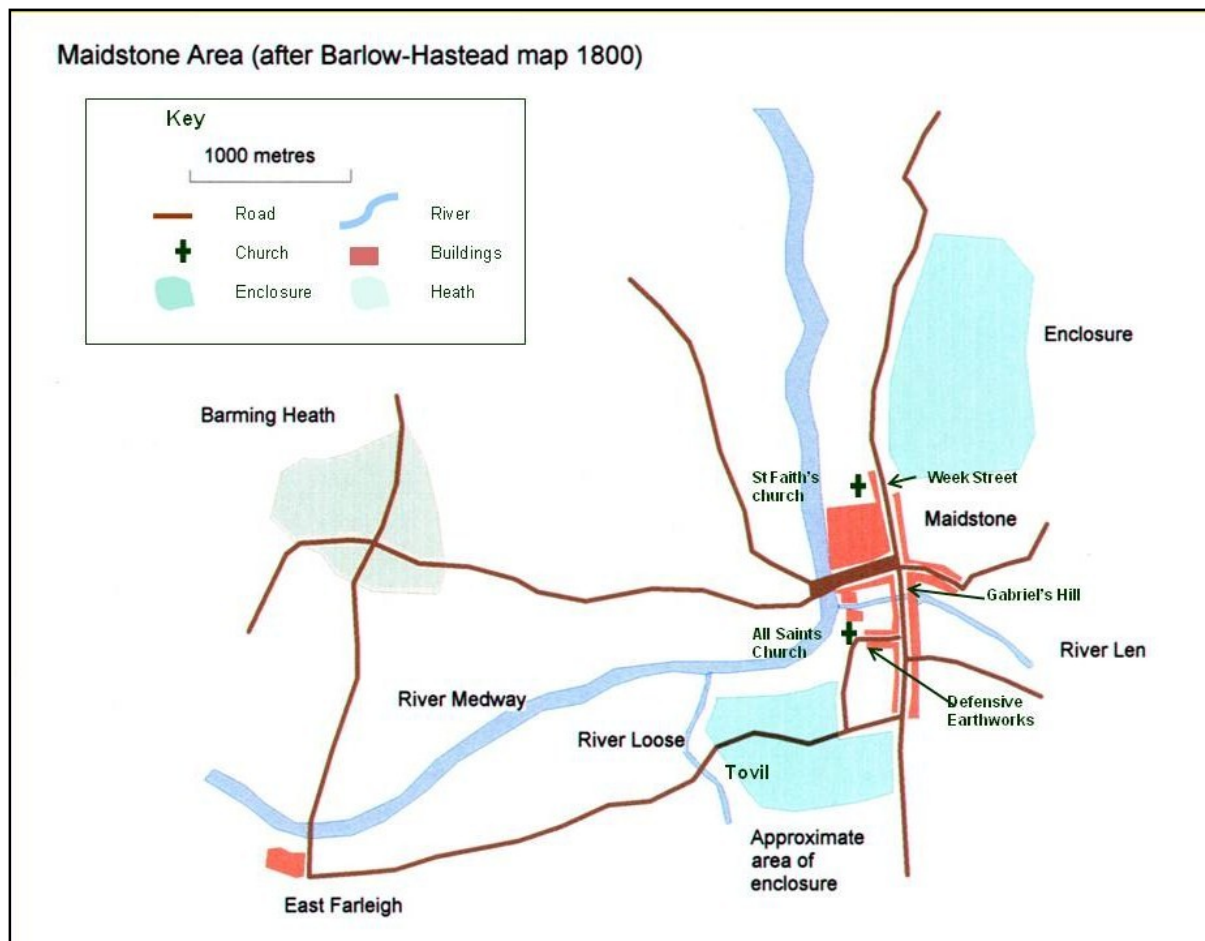


Figure 2: The Maidstone Area (map created by the author).

In Maidstone were Sir William Brockman's regiment of foot and part of Sir John Manie's regiment of horse with Sir Gamaliel Dudley, a colonel of horse and dragoons in the first Civil War who had served as a brigadier to the Earl of Newcastle and as second in command of the Northern Horse, who had been appointed Governor of Maidstone.⁸⁴ These forces, which totaled around 800 men, had not participated in the rendezvous at Barham earlier in the day.⁸⁵ The Kentish forces also had at least eight cannon, two of brass and six of iron, which appear to have been located in the defensive works that had been erected at the top of Gabriel's Hill covering the four main routes into the Maidstone.⁸⁶ Much of this artillery must have been used, at least initially, to cover the broad high street running down to the Medway bridge across which the defenders must have expected Fairfax's army to attack. Earthworks had also been hastily thrown-up on the south side of the town around the modern day Knightrider

⁸⁴ P.R. Newman, *Royalist Officers in England and Wales, 1642-1660, a Biographical Dictionary* (New York: Garland, 1881), 115.

⁸⁵ Carter, *True Relation*, 37.

⁸⁶ *The Fight between His Excellency the Lord Fairfax Forces at Maidstone and the Kentish Forces*, (British Library: BL/TT/E445(37),1648), 6; *A Letter Sent from the Lord Goring*, (British Library: BL/TT/E445(42),1648).

Street, opposite All Saint's Church.⁸⁷

The nature of the opening engagement between Fairfax's soldiers and those of the Kentish rebels is confused. Nineteenth century local tradition has a unit, probably a troop, of Kentish horse driving-off an advance party of Fairfax's horse on the road to East Farleigh above Tovil, about one mile from Maidstone.⁸⁸ But in contemporary accounts there is nothing to corroborate this apart from an oblique reference from John Rushworth, Secretary to Fairfax's army, who, writing a six in the morning on 2 June 1648, says that 'the forlorn of horse and foot being engaged in viewing the town before it was dark, came off safe.'⁸⁹ This suggests that parliamentary forces were able to view Maidstone and return to the main body of the army without harm, possibly in the face of the Kentish forces. Rushworth did not make any reference to this when he later came to write his 'Historical Collections' and his account from 2 June is, unsurprising for someone who has been awake all night either in combat or at its margins, less than coherent. It is nonetheless possible that Kentish forces in Maidstone heard the fighting at East Farleigh during the previous hour and sent a troop of horse forward to investigate which then disturbed parliamentary cavalry reconnoitering the line of advance into Maidstone, causing the latter to fall back on the main parliamentary army.

By 7 pm the good weather of earlier in the day had also changed and if it was not already raining, it would begin shortly. By this time, more of the parliamentary army had advanced to within sight of the bridge at Tovil over the river Loose. Having selected 'truth' as the word by which parliamentary soldiers would identify themselves, Fairfax ordered his dragoons to take the bridge at Tovil which seems to have been defended, probably by Kentish foot. Fairfax's dragoons forced back the Kentish troops, who were using the phrase 'king and Kent' to identify themselves, only for them to be reinforced from the town by cavalry and infantry.⁹⁰ This caused Fairfax to order more of his forces into the engagement, which became a running battle for the next two hours, from hedge to hedge, up toward the barricades on the south side of the town as the parliamentarians pushed back the Kentish troops.⁹¹ Colonel Hewson's regiment seems to have borne the brunt of the fighting and the engagement appears to have been much in the balance; at one stage Fairfax, who was suffering from gout, ordered his foot to be bandaged, mounted a horse and led his troops into action in an attempt to stiffen their resolve.⁹² Eventually, at around 9 pm, the parliamentary forces had overcome the barricades around Knightrider Street and gained entrance to the town.

Upon sighting Fairfax's army the defenders of the town had sent for reinforcements

⁸⁷ W. Newton, *History and Antiquities of Maidstone* (London: Printed for the Author, 1741), 145; Russell, *History of Maidstone*, 379. Newton says that some light fortifications were cast up at the entrance to Maidstone, 'near the place where the work-house now stands.' Russell locates the Maidstone workhouse, built in 1719, at the west end of Knightrider Street.

⁸⁸ Gardiner, *History of the Great Civil War*, 141.

⁸⁹ *A Letter Sent from the Lord Goring*, (British Library: BL/TT/E445(42),1648),1.

⁹⁰ *A Letter from His Excellency the Lord Fairfax to the House of Peers, upon Monday being the 5th of June 1648 concerning all the proceedings in Kent* (British Library: BL/TT/E445(40), 1 and 2; Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, 1137;

⁹¹ *A Letter Sent from the Lord Goring*, (British Library: BL/TT/E445(42),1648),1.

⁹² Whitelocke, *Memorials of the English Affair*, 307.

from Aylesford and Rochester.⁹³ Around 1,000 additional Kentish horse and foot came from Aylesford to help defend Maidstone, bringing the total number of Kentish forces in the Maidstone area to 1,800 - 2,000. At Rochester, the Earl of Norwich resolved to ride to Maidstone with a small number of staff officers to obtain an appreciation of the situation. Within two miles of the town, they learned that Fairfax's troops were attacking and returned to Rochester to order reinforcements forward. But the resolution of the Kentish commanders in Rochester failed.⁹⁴ Norwich's decision not to send reinforcements immediately, underlying tensions amongst the Kentish commanders and the wide dispersal of rebel forces meant that it was not possible to draw together sufficient men in a timely fashion. Some Kentish forces from Rochester were said by Rushworth to have advanced toward Maidstone, but the advance was halted within two and a half miles of the town as, by then, Fairfax had apparently manoeuvred three of his regiments of horse and one of foot north of the town to prevent Kentish reinforcements reaching Maidstone.⁹⁵ It is unclear at quite what stage Fairfax ordered this deployment, but it seems likely to have been late in the battle when he was confident that the Kentish forces in the town were pinned. The route taken by Fairfax's regiments is also unclear, though an advance around the east of the town seems most probable.

⁹³ *A Letter from His Excellency the Lord Fairfax to the House of Peers, upon Monday being the 5th of June 1648 concerning all the proceedings in Kent* (British Library: BL/TT/E445(40),3; L'Estrange. *His Vindication to Kent* (BL., C. 136, f 31, 1649), D.

⁹⁴ L'Estrange. *His Vindication to Kent* (BL., C. 136, f 31, 1649), D.

⁹⁵ Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, 1137; T. May, 'A Breviary of the History of the Parliament of England Expressed in Three Parts', in: *Select Tracts Relating to the Civil Wars in England*. Ed. By F. Maseres (London: R. Wilks, 1815), 117.



Figure 3: The river Loose at Tovil in 2005 (photo by the author).

In Maidstone, the battle continued. Fairfax's soldiers made slow progress and were forced to '[dispute] every street and turning.'⁹⁶ Rushworth's description of the fighting states that 'though I have been a member of this army ever since the first going out, and have seen desperate services in several stormings, [this] I have not seen before; for every street in the town was got by inches', provides a sense of the hard nature of the battle.⁹⁷ The Kentish forces occupied houses, shooting at the parliamentary troops from windows and doorways. With rain falling, this allowed them to keep their powder dry, unlike Fairfax's men. Under these circumstances parliamentary soldiers armed with firelock rather than matchlock muskets were of greater utility as the former relied on a spark generated by flint striking metal to ignite the powder whilst the latter required lighted match which was apt to extinguish in wet conditions; though wet powder would be likely to misfire regardless. Moreover, the parliamentary soldiers do not seem to have attempted to set fire to the timber houses sheltering the Kentish forces. Whilst the weather might have precluded such an act, it is possible that Fairfax and his officers did not wish to alienate civilian opinion further.

Fighting their way down Stone Street, Fairfax's troops crossed the bridge over the River Len,

⁹⁶ *A Letter Sent from the Lord Goring*, (British Library: BL/TT/E445(42),1648),3.

⁹⁷ Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, 1137.

which was apparently undefended, and began to advance up the narrow street which climbed Gabriel's Hill toward the defensive work at its summit armed with cannon. At a range of around 200 metres, these cannon began to fire case shot into the advancing parliamentary soldiers, who eventually '[got] under their shot', a probable reference to the point where the Kentish guns could no longer depress sufficiently.⁹⁸ The parliamentary troops must have made use of available cover in the doorways of houses and that generated by the slight curve in the street. Some may have broken through the backs of the houses and attempted to advance parallel to the main street, undoubtedly being fired upon by Kentish soldiers occupying houses overlooking them located on the high street and market square.



Figure 4: Gabriel's Hill in 2005 (photo by the author).

Eventually the barricade at the top of Gabriel's Hill was taken by Fairfax's troops and the remaining Kentish soldiers fell back on to the churchyard of St Faith's. Fighting continued there until the last of the Kentish forces were forced into the church before eventually surrendering. By now it was past midnight and the soldiers of the New Model Army were exhausted after

⁹⁸ *A Letter Sent from the Lord Goring*, (British Library: BL/TT/E445(42),1648),3.

over five hours of fighting.⁹⁹

Aftermath

Whilst the fighting at Maidstone had been hard, parliamentary losses were relatively light. Hewson's regiment appears to have borne the brunt of the fighting with its Major Carter injured, Captain Price, 'a deserving and faithful officer' and an un-named captain-lieutenant killed.¹⁰⁰ Price's widow, Anna, received £449 17s 4½d from the parliamentary exchequer by late January 1649 in back-pay due to her husband who had commenced his service with the New Model Army on 12 April 1645.¹⁰¹ The total parliamentary dead in the battle was only 30-40, most being killed assaulting the Kentish artillery on the top of Gabriel's Hill.¹⁰²

Kentish losses were far greater. Parliamentary estimates placed the dead at 200-300 and 1,300-1,400 captured, many the next day, along with the eight cannons at the top of Gabriel's Hill, 400 horses and large quantities of arms. Sir Gamaliel Dudley, and Sir William Brockman were also taken prisoner.¹⁰³ Rushworth's letter to Parliament on 2 June claimed that few of the captured rebels were from Kent and most were outsiders, including cavaliers and London apprentices, seamen and watermen. Though to what extent an accurate picture of prisoner origins could be gathered less than twenty four hours after the battle is unclear and the strong London emphasis may have been written with Parliament's earlier battles with the City in mind.¹⁰⁴

More importantly for the rebels, particularly the ardent royalists amongst them, was the impact the battle had on the resolve of Kentish forces. Desertion rates amongst Goring's forces remaining around Rochester increased dramatically after the battle and by 3 June Goring was left with around 3,000 soldiers of which only 200 were horse.¹⁰⁵ This in itself suggests that the bulk of rebels were from Kent and who returned home after seeing what had happened at Maidstone, leaving Goring with a hard core of cavaliers and outsiders who were more committed to the cause than the Kentish moderates. It would be these soldiers, with counterparts from Essex, who would suffer the siege at Colchester later that summer.

Goring's forces were insufficient to fight a pitched battle with Fairfax and he elected

⁹⁹ Carter, *True Relation*, 39; Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, 1137; *A Letter Sent from the Lord Goring*, (British Library: BL/TT/E445(42),1648),3.

¹⁰⁰ *A Letter from His Excellency the Lord Fairfax to the House of Peers, upon Monday being the 5th of June 1648 concerning all the proceedings in Kent* (British Library: BL/TT/E445(40),2).

¹⁰¹ *Warrants Issued by Army Committees, Military Commanders, etc. 1648, May-June* (National Archives: PRO SP 28/54, f. 649-650).

¹⁰² *The Fight between His Excellency the Lord Fairfax Forces at Maidstone and the Kentish Forces* (British Library: BL/TT/E445(37),1648),6; Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, 1137.

¹⁰³ *A Letter from His Excellency the Lord Fairfax to the House of Peers, upon Monday being the 5th of June 1648 concerning all the proceedings in Kent* (British Library: BL/TT/E445(40),3; *A Letter Sent from the Lord Goring*, (British Library: BL/TT/E445(42),1648), 2 and 4; Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, 1137; *News from Bowe and the Earl of Norwich his Speech at a Rendezvous on Pickenden Heath* (British Library: BL/TT/E446, 1648), 1.

¹⁰⁴ See also Ashton page 462, for a discussion of this topic.

¹⁰⁵ *A Letter from His Excellency the Lord Fairfax to the House of Peers, upon Monday being the 5th of June 1648 concerning all the proceedings in Kent* (British Library: BL/TT/E445(40),3; Carter, *True Relation*, 42; Whitelocke, *Memorials of the English Affair*, 308.

instead to leave Rochester and march toward London with the aim of locating his forces closer to Surrey and Essex in the hope that rebels there might be encouraged to join the Kentish forces. Pursued by Whalley's regiment of horse, Goring eventually rendezvoused with forces from Essex under Sir Charles Lucas around Chelmsford on 8 June, but was forced to retreat to Colchester and was subsequently besieged by Fairfax's army.¹⁰⁶ Goring with Lucas and Lord Capel eventually surrendered Colchester to Fairfax on 28 August, ending the rebellion in south-eastern England.¹⁰⁷

The Kentish rebellion was probably doomed to failure from the outset. It started as a petition to Parliament against the abuses of power of the Kentish committee, but was subverted by Kentish royalists as a challenge against the Parliament. Many of the moderates amongst the rebels were uncomfortable with this development and, as events unfolded, the tensions between moderates and cavaliers exacerbated. This fault line also precluded the establishment of effective leadership amongst the rebels and the eventual selection of Goring, a general with hardly a martial bone in his body, was never likely to fuse the rebels into an army. L'Estrange in particular highlighted Goring's failure to use the rendezvous at Burham Heath to make the point that '[the rebels] were no longer petitioners, but soldiers.'¹⁰⁸

Goring's selection need not have been fatal had the senior officers within the Kentish forces been more cohesive and decisive in their actions. They could also have done more to help themselves. The dispersion of forces into quarters across a wide area on the afternoon of 1 June when Fairfax and his army were known to be close violated the basic military principle of concentration of force. The failure of Kentish forces to maintain good intelligence on Fairfax's whereabouts and the lack of care shown over defending the bridge at East Farleigh, also suggested a less than full attention to necessary military detail.

Fairfax's maneuvering was, by contrast, highly professional. He probably observed the break-up of the rendezvous of Kentish forces on Burham Heath and saw an opportunity to attempt to defeat the rebels piecemeal. He appears to have assessed or known from reconnaissance that the bridges over the Medway at Aylesford and Maidstone were well defended and aimed instead to find an alternative crossing point. Once across the Medway he could place himself between Goring's main force and any reinforcements from the west. It also enabled him to attack Maidstone and Rochester without having to fight his way across the river. The surprise for Fairfax came when he attacked Maidstone; the resolution of the Kentish forces there and poor weather conditions made it a hard fight for the New Model Army elements under his command. But once the Kentish forces in Maidstone were defeated, the morale of many of the remaining rebels was undermined. By the time he reached Colchester all that Goring could hope for was relief by the Scottish army which had entered England in June. But the defeat of this force by Cromwell in a series of engagement around Preston in mid-

¹⁰⁶ Carter, *True Relation*, 42 and 53.

¹⁰⁷ Carter, *True Relation*, 90-93; B. Donagan, 'Goring, George, first earl of Norwich (1585-1663)', in: *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, online resource, URL: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/viewarticle/11101>. Accessed: September 2004).

On 6 March 1649, Goring was sentenced to death by the parliament for the treasonous act of leading the Kentish rebellion. Goring's petition for reprieve was granted by the casting vote of the speaker two days later and he eventually pardoned and freed in May that year.

¹⁰⁸ L'Estrange. *His Vindication to Kent* (BL., C. 136, f 31, 1649), D2.

August put paid to such hopes, thus ending the 1648 revolt.

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